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ABSTRACT

A survey offers the first overview of lifelong learning activities undertaken in the member states of the European Union, noting the strategies being implemented to varying degrees from one country to the next and presenting a first snapshot of the trends that have developed. The survey found that lifelong learning is a concept that emerged in the 1970s and defines lifelong learning in terms of individual responsibility. The survey also notes the challenges facing the education systems, such as strengthening basic learning, facilitating access and diversifying provision in higher education. The member states have all included lifelong learning in the role of enhancing employability. They are looking to their school systems to instill the ability and desire to learn from compulsory education onward and to adapt higher education to demand. The bulk of the document consists of country reports on the state of lifelong learning efforts in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. (Contains 24 references and a questionnaire.) (KC)

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Lifelong Learning: the contribution of education systems in the Member States of the European Union

RESULTS OF THE EURYDICE SURVEY

Document prepared by the EURYDICE European Unit for the
Ministerial Conference to launch the SOCRATES II,
LEONARDO DA VINCI II and YOUTH Programmes, Lisbon, 17-18 March 2000

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface 5

I. Contexts, definitions, issues 7

- *1. Lifelong learning: a concept which emerged in the 1970s* 7
- *2. A definition which, though still not final, places individual responsibility at the heart of the process* 9
- *3. Challenges facing education systems* 11

II. Results of the survey 15

- *1. Context and methodology* 15
- *2. Lifelong learning: the matter of a definition* 16
- *3. Aims and strategies at each level of the education system* 18

III. Concluding observations 27

IV. Bibliography 29

V. Aims, policies and strategies: country reports 31

Annex: Questionnaire for background paper 155

Acknowledgements 161

'One grows weary of all things, except learning'

Virgil (70 –19 B.C.)

PREFACE

Today, both education and training are of fundamental concern in a European Union striving to secure full access to social, economic and political life for all citizens. If this is to be achieved, both have to occur not merely in the earlier stages of life but throughout it, in a way that depends on individual personal and professional needs. As a result, the aims, content, methods and all procedures governing the activity of education and training systems have to be thoroughly reappraised. It is against this background that the Member States have brought lifelong learning as a goal onto their political agenda, and that the European Commission has undertaken to strengthen European cooperation in this area. The European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996 was a first initiative along these lines, which has now been consolidated and extended within the SOCRATES, LEONARDO DA VINCI and YOUTH Programmes.

The present survey provides a first overview of action undertaken in the Member States to bring about such an ambitious and far-reaching objective. The focus has been on initiatives at all levels of education. The survey is of special interest in that it goes beyond rhetoric and declarations of intent to take note of the strategies being implemented to varying degrees from one country to the next, and obtain a first snapshot of the trends they have generated. Indeed, education systems are now fully involved in this development, and a new clientele comprising people of all ages are turning to them with very different needs and expectations. Measures have thus been taken at all levels to respond to this challenge.

Yet education and training systems are not the only agencies at work in the field of lifelong education. Many relevant initiatives are the result of joint action involving the world of work, economic interests and the social partners. However, the contribution of education as such calls for special attention in the light of the finding that people who become involved in lifelong education are those for whom their earlier education and training was a worthwhile experience. It is under these circumstances that the power of education to provide the great majority of people with both a taste for learning and the core skills needed to develop any subsequent learning activity, assumes its full significance.

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The present survey, in the preparation of which the EURYDICE Network has been instrumental, is the outcome of close collaboration between the ministers responsible for education in the Member States and the European Commission. Its publication, under the Portuguese Presidency of the Council, for the Ministerial Conference to launch the SOCRATES II, LEONARDO DA VINCI II and YOUTH Programmes in Lisbon on 17-18 March 2000 points the way forward and demonstrates the need for continued and increasingly thorough analysis. Although the survey is limited in this particular instance to education, we hope that it will provide a basis for subsequent further initiatives in the same field, in partnership with the other sectors concerned.

Viviane Reding
Commissioner
Education and Culture

March 2000

8

I. CONTEXTS, DEFINITIONS, ISSUES

1. Lifelong learning: a concept which emerged in the 1970s

Under circumstances in which education systems came under general scrutiny, and in the aftermath of the May 1968 events, a series of reports and publications gave birth to a notion from which the present concept of lifelong learning is derived.

In **1970**, Paul Lengrand[1] presented, at a UNESCO Conference, a report entitled *An introduction to lifelong learning*. Following the report, UNESCO set up an International Commission on the Development of Education which consisted of seven high-level experts who were from different countries but acted in a personal capacity. Chaired by Edgard Faure[2], this Commission was entrusted with an international survey on the state of education.

In **1972**, the UNESCO Commission published its findings in the report *Learning to be. The world of education today and tomorrow*. Reiterating the right and the necessity for each individual to learn throughout his or her lifetime, the report recommended that the formal and informal contexts in which learning occurred should be closely interrelated, with resources fairly distributed between the two, as well as between educational activity for those who were youngest and oldest, respectively. The emphasis was not on the kind of system in which learners were educated, but on the quality of the education they received. Greater flexibility was recommended in terms of prerequisites. The report declared its support for education for the greatest possible number of people, following the removal of barriers that prevented the least privileged from gaining access to it. It also spoke out in favour of greater participation by learners in devising and managing the educational processes in which they were involved.

In **1973**, the OECD published the report, *Recurrent education: a strategy for lifelong learning*, which considered the debate alongside the demands of the global economy and competitiveness, and dealt especially with learning in relation to occupational activity and individual learning. While it acknowledged the role of basic education and gave rise to several reports on teacher training, the concept of recurrent education was concerned mainly with post-compulsory education and training.

The concept was taken up by the international organizations and aroused the interest of a number of experts, among them T. Husén (1974) *The Learning*

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[1] Former Head of the Adult Education Division, Education Sector, UNESCO.

[2] Faure, with whose name the report was to be frequently associated, held several senior French government posts in the course of a long political career, including that of Minister of Education in 1968-69.

Society and J. Botkin *et al.* (1979) *No limits to learning: bridging the human gap. A report to the Club of Rome*[3]. Drawing extensively on the Faure report, the latter document mooted a model of society which was dependent on individuals able to analyse and process fresh knowledge and available information, and which was rooted in responsible attitudes and values.

From the mid-19070s onwards, the concept, together with the ideas that sprang from it, were blotted out by recession and restrictions on public expenditure. The far-reaching economic and social transformations which continued in the meantime meant that, when it resurfaced in the 1990s, it was faced with circumstances totally different from those present at its inception. The fight against unemployment and the competitiveness summoned to reduce it had moved to the top of the political decision-making agenda.

Some people speak of 'lifelong education'. Others prefer to employ the term 'lifelong learning', often to avoid touching on the sometimes negative associations that basic education may have for potential learners. Boshier (1998) emphasizes, moreover, a fundamental difference between the two concepts. Directly implicit in the notion of learning is the idea of personal responsibility for one's own educational development. In order to remain employable, people, like consumers, have to be individually responsible for picking and choosing from what is available on the education and training market, in line with their requirements. However, securing access to education and training calls for the establishment of the social conditions which make this kind of strategy possible. Bringing this about means that a governmental or other agency has to develop policies and grant resources which, ideally, relate to a context that is formal (and thus concerned with education and training systems), but also non-formal (separate from these systems but associated with organized bodies in society) or informal (any activities devised by individuals themselves). The expression 'lifelong education' thus points to the need for ever-present public policies and regular determined action.

The term 'lifelong learning' has now moved ahead of 'lifelong education'. The differing initial focus of these concepts, depending on the particular organization which developed them further, along with the radical transformation of the socio-economic context to which they now belong, and the many differences observable in national systems of education and training, all account for a certain lack of precision in the currently prevailing definitions and their often very abstract nature.

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[3] The Club of Rome is an informal international organization established in 1968 that aims to promote greater understanding of the interdependence of global economic, political, natural, and social systems. With a maximum membership of 100 including industrialists, economists, and research scientists, the Club seeks to initiate new policies and take action to overcome some of the global problems facing humanity which traditional national organizations and short-term policies are unable to tackle effectively.

2. A definition which, though still not final, places individual responsibility at the heart of the process

In the 1970s, the use of a variety of terms arguably made it easier to situate the different approaches. Today, the expression 'lifelong learning' has the upper hand terminologically, yet without clarifying the meaning of the concept or making it entirely consistent.

The UNESCO publication entitled *Learning: the treasure within*, known also as the Delors report (1996), continues to promote the concept of lifelong education[4], giving it the following definition: 'As the twenty-first century approaches, education is so varied in its tasks and forms that it covers all the activities that enable people, from childhood to old age, to acquire a living knowledge of the world, of other people and themselves. It quite naturally combines the four basic types of learning described in the preceding chapter.[5] It is this educational continuum, coextensive with life and widened to take in the whole of society, that the Commission[6] has chosen to refer to in this report as 'learning throughout life'. A key to the twenty-first century, learning throughout life will be essential for adapting to the evolving requirements of the labour market and for better mastery of the changing time-frames and rhythms of individual existence.' In the wake of the Faure report, the priority frame of reference of the Delors report is not that of good progress in working life. Instead, it argues for a much more ambitious form of personal growth achievable by human beings. Translated into over 40 languages, this report has already been very widely sold and read, and the starting point for many conferences. Yet, it would appear that most public forums seeking to transform lifelong learning into an operational concept tend to take their cue from a definition that is closer to sound progress in working life, like the one formulated, for example, by the OECD.

The OECD defines the concept of lifelong learning as follows: 'This view of learning embraces individual and social development of all kinds and in all settings – formally, in schools, vocational, tertiary and adult education institutions, and non-formally, at home, at work and in the community. The approach is system-wide; it focuses on the standards of knowledge and skills needed by all, regardless of age. It emphasizes the need to prepare and motivate all children at an early age for learning over a lifetime, and directs efforts to ensure that all adults, employed and unemployed, who need to retrain or upgrade their skills, are provided with opportunities to do so.'[7] The initial concept of recurrent education has moved on to include also informal learning arrangements. The major role with

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[4] The term used in the original French-language text is 'l'éducation tout au long de la vie'.

[5] These four 'pillars' are 'learning to know', 'learning to do', 'learning to live together, learning to live with others' and 'learning to be'.

[6] The reference here is to the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, whose report was the basis for the UNESCO publication.

[7] OECD (1996) p. 15.

which the public authorities have been invested, in the provision, management and funding of the system, has now been replaced by models involving partnership and a sharing of responsibilities, in which firms and learners assume greater responsibility. Basic education remains largely subordinate to sound progress in the course of future working life. The *de facto* emphasis is on post-compulsory and adult education and training, even though the influence of basic education is acknowledged. Recent work by the OECD/CERI (1999a) on the financing of lifelong learning also highlights the part that individuals themselves and the private sector are expected to play in this novel approach by education and training systems.

Today, lifelong learning is also one of the central principles of EU policy. Originally included in the 1973 Janne report[8], it resurfaced in two Commission documents, the *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community*, and the *Memorandum on Open Distance Learning in the European Community*, both circulated in 1991. The former set store by the contribution of universities to the Single Market thanks to a highly qualified workforce. It recommended that high-level qualifications should be made much more broadly accessible, and that opportunities for updating and revitalizing knowledge and skills should be further developed. It also attached special importance to the role of higher education in expanding the sectors of continuing education and training (Hake, 1999). The other *Memorandum* showed how open distance learning was a major resource for broadening access to lifelong education and training. As time has gone by, this kind of learning has been increasingly referred to in Community texts as a vehicle of opportunity for overcoming the problems of competitiveness, employment and growth.

In 1995, the European Commission White Paper, *Teaching and Learning – Towards the learning society*, was published as the essential source of reference on Community policy in the area of lifelong learning. While it provided no definition of the concept as such, it placed the responsibility of the individual at the heart of the process. It was published just prior to the launching, in 1996, of the European Year of Lifelong Learning, which itself originated in a proposal put forward in the 1993 European Commission White Paper, *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment*. According to J. R. Gass (1996), this direct link did not mean that educational values were subordinate to considerations of industrial profitability. Indeed, the author stated that 'The European Parliament and the Council, in approving the Commission's proposal, endorsed the view that lifelong learning is as much a matter of personal fulfilment and being enabled to participate in the exercise of the rights of citizenship as it is a matter of attaining economic objectives'[9].

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[8] This report, listed as Commission of the European Communities (1973) in the bibliography, served as the basis for the First Action Programme in Education, adopted in 1976.

[9] Gass (1996), p. 5.

In 1997, the Commission communication, *What the programmes have achieved: Towards a Europe of knowledge*, tied its programme proposals for education and training in the period 2000-2006 to the aim of lifelong learning. This aim is also specifically promoted in a new action, known as Grundtvig, in the Socrates II programme which came into effect on 1 January 2000. The Treaty of Amsterdam formally laid down, though without providing a definition, that lifelong learning was henceforth the guiding principle behind Community policy in the field of education and training, and incorporated it as a supplementary notion into other areas of European policy, such as employment. As to the role of lifelong learning in the Community Employment Guidelines, it is based on a definition drawn up with a view to boosting the eventual development of a skilled workforce, while taking into account the particular circumstances of each Member State. In this context, the notion of lifelong learning is defined 'as encompassing all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies.'[10] Clearly, only such a generic abstract definition could accommodate the differing circumstances faced by each country. However, using it becomes a particularly delicate matter when attempts are made to put the concept into practice so as to implement concrete political solutions and identify indicators for measuring the progress actually achieved.

From being a universal and humanistic visionary concept (the Faure report), lifelong education has become an integral part of national and international policies. Yet, as Griffin (1998) has emphasized, this inevitably gives rise to some degree of ambiguity. The persistent question mark over the definition bears witness to this. Jarvis (1998) notes that, since the reappearance of the notion of lifelong learning in the 1990s, it has been rapidly taken for granted and extolled as a firmly established enterprise. Yet not much research has explored the phenomenon in any depth to find out what really underlies it. As in the case of other desirable social goals, there is a difference between the ideal and the reality, theory and practice, and promises and results. How is this to be measured? How do public policies nevertheless implement a concept which, by its very nature, is so complex? The results of the Eurydice survey given in the following pages offer an embryonic response as far as the formal education systems of EU Member States are concerned.

3. Challenges facing education systems

The nature of the present survey and the deadlines set for its completion totally preclude a comprehensive review of research undertaken in the field. In any event, such work is not extensive in its analysis of either the concept of lifelong learning, or the scope of the policies that seek to implement it.

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[10] European Commission (1999) 'Setting targets for lifelong learning in Europe'.

Among common elements to emerge from the previously discussed definitions is the fact that individuals learn at all stages of their existence and that, as a result, all levels of education and training are liable to contribute to an enterprise of this kind.

Strengthening basic learning

At the levels of pre-school and compulsory education, very little research related to the goal of lifelong learning appears to be undertaken. This is no doubt attributable to the fact that many political strategies for lifelong learning are focused as a priority on those aged over 16. Nevertheless, the OECD (1996) has indicated that the strengthening of basic acquired knowledge is an essential ingredient in successful lifelong learning. In the same study, the OECD also maintains that this involves fighting school failure and dropout, improving access and the quality of education, providing more personalized course options, the introduction of new technologies and teaching methods, interdisciplinary study, communicating a taste for learning, enhancing the profile of teaching staff, the development of links with the non-formal sector and cooperation with parents. In reality, therefore, the contribution of basic education to the aim of lifelong learning involves areas which education systems have addressed for some time. The difference is that, in our own particular case, these various concerns should all ideally be regarded as interrelated, so that the entire system displays greater consistency. It is nonetheless true that, considered individually in their own right, they have indeed been the focus of extensive research. School failure, core skills and, more recently, the new technologies applied to education, to name but a few, have already given rise to much written work, including a plethora of studies, reports and recommendations. Perhaps, in the near future, they will be re-examined in accordance with new research paradigms appropriate to the aim of lifelong education or learning.

Facilitating access and diversifying provision in higher education

Research into lifelong learning activity considered in conjunction with the transition from school to working life or from basic education to continuing education and training, as well as higher education, is more extensive. Given the remit of Eurydice, together with the fact that the two kinds of transition are considered in particular by the Cedefop, which is fully competent in this area, no more than a few findings from the research relating to higher education will be hinted at here.

The Research Directorate-General of the European Commission has initiated studies on conditions of access to higher education among population groups usually under-represented at this level. This was the subject of a project funded under the programme for targeted socio-economic research (in the EC Fourth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development from 1994-98), namely 'University adult access policies and practices across the European Union, and their consequences for the participation of non traditional

14

adults'. In a similar vein, the Socrates programme supported projects such as 'APEL – Assessment of prior experiential learning', which addressed questions related to the assessment of non-formal learning.

Other kinds of research are concerned with learners in a general way and with their needs. Rowley *et al.* (1998) have emphasized the extent to which learners in the knowledge-based society have different needs from those of their predecessors. To meet their requirements, there is a need to offer courses here and now, specify smaller units of content, use methods providing scope for greater participation by learners, and plan for the regular updating of qualifications awarded on the acquisition of both basic and specialized learning. As regards the prerequisites that have to be met, they should be broadly revised either through being lowered or developing systems of equivalence. To satisfy these needs, higher education should itself, therefore, become a 'learning organization' open to its environment and enter into mutually beneficial relations with partners (such as firms, etc.) which themselves sometimes generate learning and have their own training institutes.

In accordance with these changes, universities have been subjected to many different pressures in the course of recent years. Professor Edward Thomas has very recently drawn attention to the fact that, with growing competition, they have been encouraged to increase their enrolments but with few additional resources, extend the technical and vocational content of courses and cut back on their size in the interest of a more modular structure.[11] The goal of lifelong learning and the knowledge society only strengthen these revealing trends all the more. Under these circumstances, universities have to gradually learn to teach students who are older, more experienced and, in all probability, more demanding, broaden their provision to satisfy increasingly varied requirements and deliver their courses more flexibly. The pressure on universities from society to ensure that their activities are increasingly relevant to working life nevertheless raises the question of compatibility with the basic university missions of teaching and research. University relations and interfaces with other kinds of institution and sectors of higher education are also called into question. In this respect, Jónasson (1999) draws attention to the potential conflict between what are regarded as the most typical characteristics of universities, namely the exacting nature of theoretical academic knowledge, and the combination of teaching and research. He emphasizes the conflict between, on the one hand, academic learning and, on the other, the immediacy and short-term relevance of the qualifications demanded by students, industry and government. The same kind of contradiction is observed between firmly consolidated traditional disciplines and the demand for interdisciplinary curricula.

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[11] 'F2000' European Higher Education Expert Forum, Increasing Lifelong Learning in European Higher Education: The Challenges and the Prospects, contribution to the Forum by Professor Edward Thomas, Secretary General of the European Universities Continuing Education Network (EUCEN), 24 January 2000.

In addition, Jónasson identifies four major groups of learners:

- conventional first- and second-stage students undergoing basic education and training;
- older students (often enrolled part time under an arrangement linked to occupational activity) who are attracted by open university kinds of provision or adult education programmes;
- students who have already obtained a higher education qualification, which may be a postgraduate degree, and who are looking for highly specialized professional opportunities at an advanced level;
- learners who wish to diversify their occupational activity (in areas such as computer science and management) in order to move into new professional sectors, and who seek fairly general courses in such disciplines.

Faced with these varied needs and motivations, Jónasson enquires whether a unified system is appropriate in catering for such heterogeneous target groups. While recommending the inclusion of continuing education and training courses within university curricula, he also advocates a clear-cut separation between the two within institutions, in order to derive full benefit from the positive impact that these new learners can have. Rowley *et al.* adopt a similar stance when they discourage attempts to achieve a single university model, advocating instead the coexistence of institutions that have opted for different kinds of provision. Besides helping to reduce direct competition between institutions, such diversity might make it easier to cater for a far more extensive variety of target groups by means of contrasting styles and patterns of provision, and help each institution to locate its strategic niche.

Many other studies no doubt merit consideration. Our discussion of those that have been referred to specifically has attempted to identify some of the problems related to the implementation of lifelong learning, without of course forestalling the debate or drawing immediate firm conclusions.

One of the main challenges of lifelong learning is that it is concerned with educating more people more effectively and in more varied sets of circumstances at a time when public spending is in decline or levelling out (Dohmen, 1998). Substantial effort and discussion are directed towards finding ways this can be done. Although a strictly cost-related approach has its own justification, research into improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching in the system should not necessarily be conditioned by it. On the contrary, investigation of these matters deserves substantial support. From the political angle as much as that of the research itself, there is a continued need to explore the concept and the practices to which it gives rise. In recent work by the OECD/CERI (1999b), it is argued that research should take account of the school level. This is one of the aims to which the survey conducted by Eurydice seeks to contribute in its presentation of the following results.

II. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

1. Context and methodology

Under the Finnish and then the Portuguese Presidencies of the European Union, the Eurydice European Unit (EEU) undertook to prepare a working document providing a first general insight into the contribution of the formal education systems in the Member States to the aim of lifelong learning.

For this purpose, the EEU, in collaboration with the foregoing Presidencies and the European Commission, devised a questionnaire to gather relevant information (see the annexe). This was sent at the end of September 1999, to the National Units in the Eurydice Network located within the ministries responsible for educational matters, or within bodies closely associated with those ministries. Contributions from each country were prepared on the basis of a working partnership involving the National Units and the ministerial departments and services concerned. This data was then forwarded in November 1999 to the EEU, which analysed it and prepared the present document. A first provisional version of the text was presented to the Education Committee at its meetings in Brussels on 17-18 January and 22-23 February 2000, as well as to the National Units in the Network for their formal agreement.

Given the deadlines fixed for gathering and processing the necessary information, no more than a first general overview can be provided here. The complexity and scope of the subject, its political dimension and the way it is constantly changing all amount to a very strong case for addressing it more thoroughly in the future and regularly updating the findings.

Given also the field covered by the survey, its focus is the impact that the development of education systems and action to achieve lifelong learning have on each other. Economic policy, along with policies for employment and vocational training – to name only those most directly concerned – have at least as significant a contribution to make to this ambitious aim now on the agenda of many countries and international organizations. The present survey has, nevertheless, not examined these areas[12], partly because it was quite clearly not feasible, but partly too because of the specific remit of Eurydice as the information network on education in Europe. However, information concerned with vocational training and, in a few cases, with continuing vocational training, is also given in the country descriptions, depending on the way a particular national system is organized, or the kind of strategy Member States have adopted.

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[12] Among the sources which readers should consult for further information and analyses relating to these areas are the publications of Cedefop (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) and the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate-General of the European Commission.

2. Lifelong learning: the matter of a definition

Are there as many definitions of the concept of lifelong learning as there are Member States and, if so, are they of an official nature? What is their main emphasis? Are lifelong learning, continuing or lifelong education and training and adult education freely interchangeable concepts, or can their misuse lead to confusion?

These questions, which recur in the course of any analysis or simple enquiry related to the concept of lifelong learning, have been addressed by the survey in order to gain a clearer insight into what is at issue by examining the data gathered at national level.

Informal rather than official definitions

All Member States invoke a definition of the concept which, while it is not always formal, has in any event inspired the initiatives and reforms introduced in recent years. On occasions, this definition refers directly to National Plans for Employment (Ireland), documents and formal statements of position from the European Commission (the Netherlands), the consequences at national level of the Year of Lifelong Learning (Italy), or work for the OECD (French Community of Belgium, Sweden). Furthermore, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and the United Kingdom[13] have published several official documents (white and green papers, etc.) specifically or partially devoted to the subject and their view of it. Very little space is given over to the question of a definition in these documents, which primarily set out the reasons why a strategy for lifelong learning is necessary and the benefits to be expected from it.

More generally speaking, it is quite clear that thinking and discussion on these matters are still in progress, and that ideas associated with the definition of the concept have been developed much further in some countries than in others.

The Flemish and German-speaking Communities of Belgium, France, Luxembourg and Austria indicate clearly that, within their own individual contexts, lifelong learning is often incorporated into another concept which is sometimes broadened as a result. In such instances, reference is made to continuing or lifelong education and training and to adult education, concepts that themselves correspond to different realities from one country to the next. The problem, therefore, is not so much one of confusion in the terminology used, as of taking over and adapting the lifelong learning concept to the specific features of a particular education/training system and national circumstances.

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[13] When the United Kingdom alone is referred to at any time in the present document, the information concerned applies to England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Broad comprehensive definitions, with common but abstract points of reference

According to details supplied by the Member States about the national significance of the concept for them, lifelong learning includes the following elements:
- people learn throughout all stages of life;
- a wide range of skills are involved, whether general, vocational or personal (countries that closely associate the concept of lifelong learning with lifelong or continuing training and adult education tend to concentrate on vocational skills);
- formal systems of education and training, as well as non-formal activities organized outside these systems, have a part to play in public- and private-sector cooperation, especially as regards adult education;
- attention is drawn to the need for a solid grounding acquired during basic education, and to awakening people's desire and motivation to learn.

The definitions offered by Member States thus appear to be fairly close to each other[14]. Nevertheless, they relate to abstract generic elements that involve an entire system without necessarily specifying the contribution of each of its parts. As a result, these definitions have to be interpreted in the light of the strategies and policies that are actually implemented – or being devised – at each level of education. As we shall see in the following sections, this analysis throws light on more significant differences.

A top priority for all Member States: enhancing employability

Irrespective of the former traditions and policies of Member States in areas such as 'education for the people', all of them, from Sweden to Greece, now attach priority emphasis to a much more effective interrelationship between education, training and employment, as well as to the crucial issues of employability of the workforce and economic growth. All levels of education and training and all opportunities for non-formal learning (at the workplace or at home, etc.) are required to make a contribution. However, policies, initiatives and pilot projects for those aged over 16 are especially in demand, no doubt because they raise hopes that visible concrete results will be achieved in the shorter term.

The foregoing points indicate the extent to which current deliberation at national and European level is needed to refine the definition of the lifelong learning concept. As the Portuguese contribution emphasizes, the fact that lifelong learning has a twofold significance makes this harder still. It is at one and the same time a process of education and training covering someone's entire lifetime, and a frame of reference for the development of education and train-

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[14] With the exception again, however, of countries which associate lifelong learning with continuing/lifelong training, or adult education.

ing systems as a strategy designed to address the implications of major economic and societal changes.

3. Aims and strategies at each level of the education system

In practice, is the activity of lifelong learning mainly the focus of measures relating to continuing or lifelong education and training, and adult education? To what extent are other levels of the education system also involved? What are the concrete initiatives and public-sector policies implemented at each level of the education system, and with what aim in mind?

Stepping up involvement at pre-school level

'Lifelong learning from the cradle to the grave' is a frequently encountered formula in much written material on the subject dealt with here. What, then, is the action undertaken by Member States at the level of pre-school education with the aim of facilitating lifelong learning in practice?

There are important projects in place in many countries in pre-school education but, in responses to the survey, specific mention of short-term initiatives or aims in this area were made by seven countries, as follows:

- **enhancing provision and increasing participation** in a general way (Greece and Portugal) or in a way targeted at certain age-groups (children aged 3 or under, in Spain; all children aged 4 and 5 in Sweden, for three hours a day; those aged 6 in Finland where all 6-year-olds will be provided with the right to free pre-school education from 2001 onwards), with the occasional participation of services offering psychological support and guidance in teaching matters (Spain);
- **developing a national frame of reference** based on quality standards for learning aims and curricula (Ireland and Sweden, which finalized its first pre-school programme in 1998), while supporting private initiatives in the field (Ireland);
- **diversifying provision** by offering new services (enabling part-time attendance, parent participation, etc.) and, in some cases, making local arrangements to monitor the progress of children and young people from the pre-school stage to the end of adolescence (Italy);
- **cutting costs borne by families** (Finland, Sweden).

Instilling ability and desire to learn from compulsory education onwards

At this level of education, all Member States have introduced measures and policies geared to a society inspired by the practice of lifelong learning. Furthermore, compulsory education is considered to be fundamental in relation to the ability and inclination that a person will subsequently develop *vis-à-vis* the activity involved.

The actions that are planned or have been introduced, either recently or over a period of some years, may be summarized as follows:

- **identifying in curricula, desirable core skills** (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom); these skills generally cover, though with varying emphasis depending on the country concerned, so-called basic knowledge, the ability to learn to learn, personal development and social skills (Austria), autonomous learning (German-speaking Community of Belgium, Denmark, Germany and Austria), values and attitudes associated with citizenship, particularly via the study of multidisciplinary topics (such as the environment and equality between the sexes, as in Spain; the world of work, languages and intercultural learning, as in Austria), and the introduction of new areas of knowledge (such as sustainable development, in Denmark) and know-how (Spain), a critical spirit (Ireland) and literacy and numeracy (the United Kingdom); these core skills are taught within a continuous single structure for all pupils (Sweden), while taking care to ensure a sound balance between basic knowledge and general and personal skills, and re-examining teacher training (Denmark); in the case of Germany, core skills are defined in particular with an eye to the prospect of continuing education and training at a later stage;

- **fighting school failure and dropout** (French and German-speaking Communities of Belgium, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and the United Kingdom/Scotland), by introducing positive discrimination policies and measures against violence and absenteeism (French and German-speaking Communities of Belgium), developing remedial schools (Greece), by offering personalized educational pathways in the form of special support classes and temporary classes, and assistance to the most vulnerable children (France), allocating increased specific resources to certain educational areas (France) and making available to them psychological support (Spain, Ireland) or arrangements for guidance and counselling (Austria), or by collaborating closely with the entire educational community, including local authorities, while developing plans for quality enhancement (Portugal);

- **adopting the new information and communication technologies (ICTs)** to familiarize pupils with their use and prepare them to master these resources in their future working life (French and Flemish Communities of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom), and to extensively promote the use of ICTS as a teaching tool, in the in-service training of teachers (Sweden);

- **instilling an inclination and motivation to learn in pupils** (Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom);

- **introducing new forms and methods of teaching, as well as a new selection of teaching materials, in order to stimulate greater pupil participation** (Germany, Greece and the Netherlands) and lay the foundations for those concerned to be more proactive in taking charge of their own future education and training and their involvement in the life of society in general (Austria);

- **reassessing all the aims of compulsory education** (French Community of Belgium);

- **diversifying the final stages of compulsory secondary education** with different course offerings, so that individual pupils can choose from subjects and approaches that correspond to their main interests (Spain, Ireland and the Netherlands);

- **generally intensifying cooperation with families and the entire community** (Ireland);

- **setting up new forms of administration** by giving local authorities (Sweden) or schools greater autonomy with a view to general improvements in the quality of the system and the education it offers (Portugal);

- **raising the upper age limit for compulsory schooling (Ireland), or increasing the obligation to take part in education and training activities up to the age of 18** (Italy) – in the latter case, these activities are organized outside the formal system, and focus mainly on guidance and the acquisition of transversal skills; subsequently, studies may be taken up again or extended in the social, cultural and scientific fields;

- **ensuring that all young people obtain a secondary school leaving certificate, without necessarily raising the minimum compulsory school-leaving age** (Finland).

Broadening and diversifying upper secondary education

At the level of general upper secondary education, the actions, strategies and aims to which Member States have drawn attention represent, for the most part, the logical continuation of the policies referred to under compulsory education.

Technical and vocational upper secondary education is also the subject of measures introduced in compulsory education, some of which may be more innovative than in the latter. Two examples of measures in this particular upper secondary branch are:

- **emphasizing core skills** and encouraging autonomous learning (Germany and the Netherlands), while establishing a new environment and an atmosphere that will promote a positive attitude to lifelong learning (Austria), developing the maturity of would-be graduates and preparing them for flexibility on the labour market (Spain), improving personal skills by means of content conducive to communication, initiative and openness to the world, etc. (Germany); consolidating the foundation and motivation required for learning (Denmark);

- **fighting school failure and dropout** (France, the Netherlands and Austria) and providing personalized study options (France, Sweden).

Technical and vocational upper secondary education is nevertheless the focus for specific actions geared to the possibility of lifelong learning. These measures may be characterized as follows:

- **greater diversity of provision** (France, Portugal) and **range of study options** (Ireland), the development, from a common and sufficiently broad grounding, of a variety of different options that all provide access to higher education (Austria, Sweden); structuring of this provision in modular form (Flemish Community of Belgium) and encouraging the formation of networks of vocational *lycées* (France);

- the **development of cooperation between schools or colleges and business** (Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom/England, Wales and Northern Ireland) by intensifying the contacts of both learners and teachers with the world of work (Germany); the **development of partnerships with occupational sectors and local authorities** (France, Portugal) and **cooperation with industry** (Ireland);

- **greater flexibility in the various kinds of arrangements** (for example, through the setting up of centres for linked work and education or training with a reduced timetable – French Community of Belgium), the **organization of courses** to facilitate study and working life in combination (Greece), **conditions of admission and credit transfer** enabling options or subjects to be changed during the overall course of study (Germany, the Netherlands);

- the **development of comprehensive integrated approaches** by means of pathways to integration offering introductory support, guidance and training, etc. (French Community of Belgium);

- the **development of guidance** (Spain, Portugal), its modernization (United Kingdom/England, Wales and Northern Ireland), and better information on the various different kinds of provision (Portugal);

- an **increase in the number of available places, as well as in quality** (Austria, United Kingdom/England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

In some instances, a more effective contribution on the part of technical and vocational upper secondary education to achieving lifelong learning involves development of the sector as such, along with financial investment in it (United Kingdom/Scotland), or the introduction of novel approaches in the national context. In the case of Italy, a new system of learning has been launched on an experimental basis. It combines in-company training and general education away from the workplace, with the aim of systematizing professional experience, providing a scientific and technical grounding, developing transversal and personal, yet transferable, skills and professional expertise. In Portugal, the aim is to develop a system of initial vocational training that combines employment and training.

Adapting higher education to demand

Higher education has a special contribution to make to lifelong learning. Much is at stake, in so far as the outcome of real competition between public- and private sector logic may eventually reshape the main features of the sector.

The action undertaken – or planned – by Member States is concentrated essentially around four main aims:

- **Diversifying provision so that it is 'made to measure' and corresponds more effectively to the wide variety of needs facing learners, the world of work, the community (local or regional) and society in general, while making the best possible use of available resources**

  There is repeated reference to the introduction of greater flexibility in an attempt to achieve this goal.

  As far as the **organization of courses** is concerned, reference is made to courses with shifted timetables (French Community of Belgium, Austria), part-time courses (Sweden), distance courses with extensive use of the new ICTs (Denmark, Austria and Sweden), and the establishment of distance universities (Spain). Incentives to innovate and set up flexible learning environments through the use of novel teaching methods incorporating the new ICTs may be provided by (for example) awarding subsidies to schools (Flemish Community of Belgium).

  As regards the **organization of content**, a modular structure is preferred to a course-based one (Denmark, Germany).

  As to **the relevant players**, the involvement of universities in continuing vocational education and training (Germany, Austria), or continuing and higher vocational education and training (Italy) is increasing. In the case of Spain, this involvement is reflected in an increase in the number of specialized courses for those who have obtained a vocational qualification. In France, it entails strengthening the provision of vocational courses in the IUTs (university institutes of technology), the organization of periods spent in firms, and the introduction of a *licence professionnelle* (vocational degree) from the 2000/2001 academic year. Development of the provision of non-university higher education in adult education, and its role in the development of communities, is very much on the agenda (Finland).

Attention is drawn to the *response to the needs of the world of work and the community* in establishing programmes that facilitate combined study and work (Netherlands), and in making available the capacity and results of research and development activity for the benefit of industry (Ireland). Cooperation with firms, local communities and society in general, which has unquestionably always existed, is now formalized in legal texts (Sweden).

- **Increasing provision**
  Diversification is itself regarded as a means of attracting more participants (Greece), for example by increasing the number of course options (Spain). Schools and other institutions are developing new kinds of modules to update the skills of their past graduates at a later date (Denmark). The creation of a number of additional places on higher education courses is planned in the United Kingdom, as well as in non-university education (the polytechnics) in Finland, where adult and open polytechnic education will be strengthened. Specific provision for retired people is becoming more widespread (Spain).

- **Extending access to sectors of the population which have hitherto been weakly represented**
  Encouraging the participation of usually under-represented groups in higher education (United Kingdom/Northern Ireland) may entail second chance programmes, specific support for the handicapped, financial support or greater flexibility as regards conditions governing access (Ireland), for example for those aged over 25 who do not have all the qualifications required (Portugal). The development of fresh contacts between schools and institutions of further and higher education, especially in disadvantaged areas, and financial incentives for institutions committed to policies for broader access are encouraged in the United Kingdom (Scotland). Other measures include, in particular, the establishment of faculties (the French Community of Belgium) or of open universities (Greece). Even countries in which the recognition of professional experience increased the chances of adults gaining access to higher education, are strengthening their policies in this area (Finland, Sweden).

- **Fighting failure and dropout**
  Portugal and France have introduced measures linked to this concern. For example, to fight premature dropout from the education system, the reorganization of the first stage of higher education in France has provided for initial six-month 'guidance' periods, points at which students can change their

subject preferences, teaching in small groups and the development of tutoring by more advanced students.

Attention is also drawn to the introduction of a national assessment system (Portugal) or a new funding structure (United Kingdom/Northern Ireland for post-compulsory and higher education) as examples of policies for adapting higher education to the aim of lifelong learning.

Strengthening and modernizing adult education[15]

In the broad sense, several countries state that adult education is the priority in their efforts to contribute to the aim of lifelong learning. Portugal and Sweden say that they are in the process of drawing up a new strategy for adult education. What, then, are the clearest apparent trends in current or pending initiatives in this area, in the various Member States?

- **Encouraging and facilitating access** for adults, by making use of methods particularly suited to them (Denmark, Portugal), in providing for a maximum of flexibility (Denmark, Germany, Austria, Sweden) for example in the organization of training timetables (Ireland), by providing different types of financial assistance (Denmark, Sweden) or training leave (Denmark, Germany), by not laying down prior conditions for admission to adult education programmes and by providing the opportunity to undertake vocational training courses subsidized by the government (the Netherlands), by enabling adults to study for qualifications at all levels (Spain), exploiting the potential of distance education (Portugal, Sweden), or introducing changes to the whole system (Italy); motivating adults to take part in activities organized for them, and mobilizing all resources and institutions (Portugal).

- **Improving and broadening provision** through the use of new technologies (Denmark, Austria, United Kingdom/England, Wales and Northern Ireland), by broadening the range of subject areas and options for selection (Spain), offering the teaching of languages (Spain, Austria), increasing the number of courses with a focus on professional activities (Ireland), instituting specific programmes for those who are poorly qualified (Denmark and Sweden) or who have prematurely left school, and by introducing second chance programmes (Austria, Portugal) for example for those who have been unemployed for over six months (Ireland); there is occasional emphasis on the particular levels of qualification or skills that are targeted: the acquisition of formal qualifications (Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal), especially at upper secondary level (Sweden), or reading, writing and arithmetical ability (United Kingdom/England and Northern Ireland).

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[15] As already mentioned, only the part linked to the formal education system is considered here.

- **Facilitating transparency and the transition** between secondary and adult education, by organizing them along increasingly similar lines in terms of fields of study, modules and forms of provision (Flemish Community of Belgium), in order to extend credit transfer systems (Denmark, the Netherlands and Austria), or to improve consistency between initial and continuing education and training (Germany, France and Austria).

- **Developing cooperation and partnerships** between employers and trade unions with a view to learning at the workplace (Germany, Ireland, Portugal, United Kingdom/England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and with local authorities (United Kingdom); encouraging participation by all kinds of institution within the education system and cooperation between them, so that each contributes its own special strength (Denmark).

- **Improving guidance and information** (Denmark, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Finland, United Kingdom/England, Wales and Northern Ireland), where necessary as far as the training of advisers is concerned.

- **Validation of skills not formally recognized** (the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden), for example by means of a diploma or certificate to validate them after five years of professional experience (France); unifying accreditation systems (Ireland).

- **Making available 'individual learning accounts'** (United Kingdom/England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

III. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The society of lifelong learning is not confronting us but already with us. Ministers responsible for education and training in European countries have chosen this aim to guide their policies. However, the way it should be implemented has not been irrevocably established. What is at issue, therefore, is how the concept should now be institutionalized.

Both a rhetorical platform with a message to get across, and a way of guiding systems to adapt to the new demands of society, the goal of lifelong learning has been the focus of different patterns of implementation. The way in which Member States have taken over the concept depends on the specific nature of their systems. However, all use it to impart the necessary momentum to – and provide the ultimate justification for – reforms they might possibly introduce anyway. It is therefore a unifying force at European level, which is reached via different pathways, with the difficulty that implies in defining it. It is also a concept designed to satisfy what society demands, with little room for half measures. The contribution of education systems to this requirement becomes fully significant in so far as research reveals that people whose progress through education and training has been satisfactory, are those who later rely on education and training facilities, sometimes on a recurrent basis. This finding is no doubt one of the basic considerations in favour of the greatest possible involvement of education systems in making the society of knowledge a reality.

The aim of the survey was to identify concrete initiatives introduced or envisaged in the short term by Member States as part of the contribution of education systems to *de facto* lifelong learning. This first exercise in gathering information which goes beyond declarations of intent and rhetorical speeches should ideally be regularly updated, given the many further proposals and initiatives taking shape. It nevertheless prompts a few preliminary observations.

First, there is considerable pressure on education systems at each of their levels, but to an extent that depends on the country concerned, to make their own contribution to the aim of lifelong learning.

Secondly, similar trends are observable whatever the educational level concerned. Improving, broadening and diversifying provision, fighting failure, making use of new information and communication technologies, developing cooperation within and outside the education system, increasing flexibility and improving transparency – these and other aims are all made clear, regardless of whether compulsory or upper secondary education, higher or adult education are at issue. Some of these aims are even in evidence at pre-school level.

Thirdly, several of the different activities carried out reflect concerns that have been addressed by the world of education for several years, such as the fight against school failure and dropout, the identification of core skills, and cooperation between schools and business, etc. Might it be that the aim of lifelong learning is the joint mobilization of all these initiatives from now on in a common cause, no less than the common commitment of Member States to ensuring together that education systems respond more effectively to the needs of our societies?

As Laderrière (1999) has emphasized, the aim of lifelong learning presupposes basic changes in the role of the public authorities and the human resources policies of education systems. As he also suggests, the essential clue to success in this area will be the degree of consistency between the ambitions of individual people, the plans drawn up by institutions, along with local and regional plans, and the overall strategy of the State which has to ensure the quality of basic education. Are the initiatives identified in the survey merely adaptations of the system that will not necessarily lead to the achievement of lifelong learning in its most ambitious form? Are the nature and current organization of teaching within systems, along with the preparation of teachers in particular and all stakeholders in general, changing profoundly or simply undergoing a form of adaptation? Is it true, as Collins (1998) suggests, that instead of using the concept of lifelong learning as the basic principle driving a fundamental change, the various interests have done no more than simply append it to the existing approaches? Clearly, the survey cannot answer these questions. What it does reveal, on the other hand, is the need for analysis and research to find answers to them and identify what really stands in the way of putting the goal into practice. It is from this starting point that international cooperation, the exchange of information and the comparison of experience assume their full significance.

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V. AIMS, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES: COUNTRY REPORTS

The information which follows was prepared on the basis of a working partnership involving the National Units and the ministerial departments and services concerned.

All the sheets are structured in accordance with the following pattern:

- a definition of the concept of lifelong learning in the Member State concerned;
- a summary of the aims and strategies for achieving a society based on lifelong learning;
- an account of the contribution incumbent on each level of the education system: a breakdown by level which is similar without being entirely identical has been used for all countries, given that not only the systems are different but, more importantly, the strategies associated with lifelong learning follow a logic that differs from one country to the next;
- an overview of the pilot programmes or schemes introduced; this information is not systematically available for all countries, as some countries have not necessarily opted for pilot projects before launching a more fully fledged strategy, while others have not yet reached the stage at which such projects might be initiated.

Belgium ***33***
Denmark ***49***
Germany ***55***
Greece ***61***
Spain ***65***
France ***73***
Ireland ***79***
Italy ***89***
Luxembourg ***99***
Netherlands ***101***
Austria ***105***
Portugal ***115***
Finland ***123***
Sweden ***129***
United Kingdom ***141***

BELGIUM

FRENCH COMMUNITY

The significance of the concept

There is no official definition as such but, rather, a body of concepts/notions referred to at various points in the legislation, as well as different schemes, initiatives or measures introduced by the French Community which correspond to the concept and the OECD definition of it.

Within the new legislature established after the June 1999 elections, a governmental declaration was adopted. The various Community reform measures proposed in it include the following:

'The government will take steps to lay the foundations of lifelong education for all by both making the most of mechanisms and arrangements already in existence, and initiating innovative areas of activity in education and training.

In particular, it will devote special attention to the introduction of credit-based modules in higher education, as well as in technical and vocational education. It will do everything to ensure that skills validation is adapted to needs in this area and, in so doing, also take account of non-formal skills related to experience.

Finally, the government will see to it that all provision in continuing education is enhanced so as to respond as effectively as possible to economic, social, cultural and civic demands'.[1]

Aims and strategies

Strengthening basic learning, improving the overall consistency of the education system, and diversifying provision

The main aims are as follows:
- strengthen basic learning and improve the transition between education and working life (see the 'missions' decree, basic skills, the cyberschools scheme, etc.);
- improve the overall consistency of the education system;
- ensure that systems of education and initial or continuing training match demand/the labour market, and encourage adult education and training, through the provision of linked work and education or training;
- diversify the provision of education and training.

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[1] Unofficial translation from the French, by the Eurydice European Unit (EEU).

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Compulsory education

The 'missions' decree (on the tasks facing schools)
This July 1997 decree sets out the general aims of compulsory education for all school sectors, divides all paths through school into stages, and establishes the principle that certain skills should be acquired before the end of lower secondary education, as should final skills before the completion of secondary education in its entirety. This specification of skills should enable the attainment of objectives for quality and output, whatever the preferred school system.

Special attention should be drawn to Article 6 of this decree which refers to the concept of lifelong learning:

Defining the final skills to be acquired at the end of each stage

'The French Community, in the case of education for which it is directly responsible, and any administrative body, in the case of grant-aided education, simultaneously pursues the following aims, regardless of sectorial distinctions:
- the promotion of self-confidence and the personal development of each pupil;
- the acquisition of knowledge and skills by all pupils in such a way that they are capable of learning throughout life, and assuming an active role in economic, social and cultural life;
- preparing all pupils to become responsible citizens able to contribute to the development of a democratic pluralistic society which displays solidarity and is open to other cultures;
- ensuring that all pupils have the same opportunity to achieve social emancipation.'[2]

The decree on positive discrimination

Fighting school failure and dropout

Since the start of the 1990s, the French Community of Belgium has introduced several measures aimed, in particular, at fighting school failure and dropout. Following the July 1997 decree on the tasks facing schools, parliament adopted a new more specific decree in June 1998 with the aim of better 'ensuring that all pupils have the same opportunity to achieve social emancipation'. This decree contained a set of measures, some of which had been in existence for several years. By integrating them, it sought to strengthen the effectiveness of the resources set aside for them, and make the policy adopted easier to observe and assess.

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[2] Unofficial translation from the French, by the EEU.

Two kinds of measure were prescribed as follows:

- the first related to some schools that would benefit from 'positive discrimination' measures. After being selected on the basis of objective socio-economic criteria, these schools would receive increased human and financial resources – a minimum of BEF 360 million (EUR 8.92 million) for basic education and at least BEF 310 million (EUR 7.68 million) for secondary education. Furthermore, the decree confirmed the setting up of a 'school mediation service' intended to encourage, preserve or re-establish a climate of confidence among pupils, parents and teaching staff. It also instituted a 'commission for positive forms of discrimination' whose responsibilities included the coordination of all projects;
- the second group of measures applied to all schools and sought to prevent violence and fight absenteeism. The measures concerned were part of the former provisions which they specifically referred to and reinforced.

The decree on basic education

Redefining the aims of basic education

Adopted in July 1998, this decree has redefined the aims and resources to be mobilized in nursery, as well as ordinary and special primary education. By means of a whole series of measures concerned with the running of schools (which include adapting the annual number of days of schooling, along with the calculation to determine the size of classes and how they are distributed, and the timetable of teachers and pupils), as well as through language learning, this decree has sought to achieve the following:

- introduce the teaching of a modern language other than French in all schools;
- enable schools to offer some courses and teaching activities in the school timetable in sign language;
- encourage three language lessons a week to help pupils who are stateless, naturalized or of foreign nationality, to become familiar with the language of instruction;
- enable the administrative authority to set up, if it wishes, a consultative body for each school, neighbourhood, administrative area or entity depending on the sector concerned.

Higher education

Teaching based on a special part-time schedule

Certain courses in higher education may be organized in accordance with a timetable shifted towards the end of a normal working day. Where this occurs, the course is spread over a greater number of years, but otherwise remains equivalent to the corresponding daytime studies. Its schedule is the only feature distinguishing it from full-time provision, and the qualification awarded on its completion carries the same weight. At present, the main courses offered in accordance with these arrangements are long higher education courses in the field of economics, including in particular those offered by the *Instituts Supérieurs de Commerce* (higher institutes for business studies).

Short higher education courses offered in accordance with a shifted timetable pattern are still limited (an example being the training of social welfare assistants).

Shifted timetable arrangements

Some courses in the second stage of university higher education, generally in the area of political science, administration, economics and the social sciences, may also be provided within a shifted timetable.

Adult education and training or retraining

Education for 'social advancement'

Education for 'social advancement' at the level of secondary and higher education is fitted into a shorter timetable than that of the corresponding full-time courses.

As with other levels of education, this provision is the responsibility of the various sectors corresponding to the Communities, the provinces, the *communes* and the administrative bodies – denominational or otherwise – for private (independent) education. Besides all those who want to supplement their basic education and training, it is intended also for people who wish to retrain or acquire further expertise in any particular field in order to meet the requirements of firms, administration or teaching or, more generally, their personal socio-economic or cultural environment.

Over 650 different kinds of course are available, ranging from literacy classes to retraining at the cutting edge of high tech. Leisure-oriented courses (in areas such as photography, cookery, and the decorative arts) are offered alongside those of a more vocational nature (including specialization in new industrial processes, computer science and languages).

Originally conceived as a means to personal advancement for people already working, this provision is now a category of continuing education and training that forms an integral part of the movement towards lifelong education.

Certificates to which this kind of education may lead include, in particular, the *certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur* (*CESS*) – *humanités générales* ('general humanities' certificate of upper secondary education), corresponding to the qualification required for access to higher education.

Initial vocational training

Intermediate business sectors

The training offered by the *Institut francophone de Formation Permanente pour les Classes moyennes et les Petites et Moyennes Entreprises* (Francophone Institute for Vocational Training for middle-level business sectors and small and medium-sized enterprises) provides for the acquisition of general and vocational knowledge needed for self-employment in one of the occupations represented on the *Conseil supérieur des Classes moyennes* (including trade or craft small and medium-sized enterprises and certain intellectual occupations). The Institute has 13 sub-regional departments and coordinates the activities of 13 vocational training centres for this particular business category.

The basic training, apprenticeship, is geared to acquisition of the skills required for self-employment. Since the 1984 royal decree, the various forms of apprenticeship are recognized as meeting the requirements of part-time compulsory schooling up to the age of 18, as defined in the law of 29 June 1983 on compulsory schooling. In fact, the pattern is one of linked-work-and-training for young people who have reached their fifteenth birthday and adults.

Following this basic training, apprentices may register for training as business managers, which lasts occasionally one, but usually two or three years.

The Institute also provides extended courses to refine or update skills, along with courses for retraining and the further upgrading of teaching skills for the benefit of managers who will be training apprentices.

Centre for linked work and education or training

When full-time schooling comes to an end at the age of 15 or 16, pupils may choose courses from a smaller-scale timetable in lower or upper secondary vocational education, enrolling for this purpose in a *Centre d'Éducation et de Formation en Alternance* (CEFA, or centre for linked work and education or training). Attached to schools providing full-time secondary education, these centres offer courses comprising 50-minute periods spread over 20 weeks a year, with one part devoted to general training and the other to preparation for taking up a particular occupation.

At the end of each year, pupils receive a certificate testifying to the skills acquired and, if they pass a qualifying examination, they receive a 'qualification' certificate equivalent to the qualification awarded in full-time secondary vocational education.

This training for a given occupation is offered in the sectors of agronomy, industry, the building trades, hotel work, food, clothing, applied arts, economics, personal services and applied sciences.

At present, the following categories of young people may also be enrolled as trainees in CEFAs:

- those aged between 16 and 21 who have experienced difficulty at school and have concluded an industrial apprenticeship contract;

Linked-work-and-training

- those under 25 who have completed their schooling in secondary education with a smaller timetable, and have concluded an employment/training agreement or any other form of contract or agreement recognized under labour legislation, which belongs to the category of linked-work-and-training approved by the Executive of the French Community.

Education and training providers for people with few qualifications
Education and training providers for people with few qualifications have grown steadily in number, under difficult economic circumstances with especially high rates of youth unemployment. Different providers have their own particular characteristics and, in recent years, efforts to coordinate the various initiatives have become increasingly widespread.

Alongside conventional institutional training providers, and in a way meant to complement their services, the non-profit-making sector has developed training centres for initiatives concerned primarily with socio-professional integration, and training at the workplace. This activity is intended to secure vocational qualifications for people, together with remunerated employment subject to social security arrangements.

The initiatives focusing on social and vocational integration are for anyone with few qualifications or, in other words, without the *Certificat d'Enseignement Secondaire Supérieur* (CESS, or upper secondary school certificate), who is without work, yet available to work and seeking employment.

A new legislative and regulatory package has been drawn up so that people can acquire, by appropriate methods in small working groups, the vocational qualifications needed for integration into active life. Flexibility, adaptability and specific responses to match the requirements of specific locations and target groups are the watchwords for these initiatives. Provision is generally in the form of linked-work-and-training. Various activities have been implemented within an integrated approach, including introductory help and information, guidance, lifelong education, vocational training and placements involving in-company work.

The financial contribution of the French Community only partially covers the activities of these bodies which also generally receive financial support from the European Social Fund.

Working in accordance with Community provisions, these initiatives are often led to collaborate with other providers or services, including the FOREM (employment office), the Centre Public d'Aide Sociale (CPAS, or public centre for social assistance) and institutions concerned with 'social advancement'.

The pathway to integration

The pathway to (re)integration is the latest mechanism intended to improve vocational qualifications and encourage employment. It corresponds to a requirement of the European Social Fund. The pathway makes it possible to think in terms of introductory assistance, guidance, counselling, monitoring, preparatory training, training, job-seeking and employment as a single process. Its interrelated stages should facilitate the integration of job-seekers (by helping them to devise a logical personal strategy) and enable regional and Community institutions to work in a way that is consistent overall from a sub-regional standpoint.

The arrangements are targeted primarily at people who are the most disadvantaged or least qualified.

Lifelong education

The decree of 8 April 1976 established conditions for the recognition and subsidies awarded to organizations for adult lifelong learning in general, as well as for furthering the socio-cultural status of workers. It provides for lifelong education activities brought together within the scope of the general (formerly national) organizations, and the regional and local organizations.

Centres for 'self-expression and creativity' were also part of the thrust of the April 1976 decree. They are intended especially for milieux in which any possibility that these faculties might be nurtured has been thwarted by the real conditions characterizing cultural, social and economic life. There are 200 such centres in the French Community.

Other measures

Distance education

Distance education

Adapted to the level of each student, distance education is above all for adults who are obliged to compensate for shortcomings in their education or training, or to retrain or prepare for the examinations of the state (Community) examining boards in order to obtain a secondary education qualification. Distance education may also lead to competitive examinations for recruitment or advancement at the different levels of public-sector administration.

Literacy courses

Literacy courses are for the basic essentials and skills needed in reading, writing and arithmetic to be acquired and brought up to scratch, so that learners can undertake either vocational training leading to a qualification, or basic education and training. The courses are targeted at people lacking the *Certificat d'Études de Base* (CEB, or basic studies certificate) or any equivalent qualification.

Literary specialists say that between 300,000 et 600,000 adults in the French Community are unable to write correctly. No data from reliable surveys enable the scale of this phenomenon to be identified accurately.

Basic training for adults who experience difficulty in reading and writing is organized by grass roots associations. Its take-up is limited, mainly involving persons of foreign nationality. 'Lire et écrire' ('reading and writing') is an organization currently coordinating the different initiatives in this sector. The bodies concerned are funded by the departments for lifelong education and social affairs.

Literacy courses

The number of people involved in literacy courses is rising, with three-quarters of the participants aged over 25, and 79% of foreign nationality. Some of them were educated abroad, and are therefore faced with learning French as a foreign language.

While most learners (59%) follow a light timetable (under eight hours a week), almost a quarter (23%) attend courses involving over 12 hours a week.

Open faculties

So-called 'open' faculty provision has given rise to several experiments launched by universities or organizations for lifelong education working with them. In all cases, the aim has been to offer adults involved in professional occupations university education of a kind not provided in full-time courses.

Pilot projects and action programmes

1. The Cyberschools Scheme

The French Community has stepped up its activity, and formed partnerships with the Regions in order to supply schools with computer equipment and facilities suitable for teaching purposes, and with the federal government and Belgacom[3], to secure lines giving access to the Internet.

Broadly speaking, the programme for equipping schools with computers has been spread over two stages:

- the first has targeted ordinary and special education and occurred during the 1999 calendar year;
- the second is for basic education and is taking place during 2000.

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[3] Main provider for the telephone and telecommunications network in Belgium.

2. Strengthening action for positive discrimination

The social and educational difficulties of young people, together with the teaching they receive in schools, have inspired the so-called 'positive discrimination' programme, which involves the following:

- *Mediation at school*

  For several years, the French Community, in partnership with the *Fonds d'Impulsion à la Politique des Immigrés* (FIPI, or fund to promote policy for immigrants) has been experimenting with the use of mediators in schools which experience a high dropout rate, mainly because their pupils (usually children from backgrounds facing social exclusion) fail to integrate properly into the school social and cultural system.

  The task of the school mediator is to reconcile these young people with their surroundings, and thus re-motivate them to become actively engaged in learning. To this end, mediators have to act as a resource not only *vis-à-vis* pupils but also, depending on circumstances, families, voluntary or non-profit-making associations, and also those who safeguard law and order (mediators very often have to ensure better communication between pupils, a school, and the police and judicial system).

  Within schools, mediators have a special role as agents for reconciliation, who attempt to prevent and manage any conflict in relations both among pupils and between individual pupils and teachers.

- *Intercultural schooling*

  So that the intercultural reality represented by pupils in the French Community is experienced as a source of enrichment, rather than fear of what is different, the Community is doing all it can to help immigrants integrate into the social fabric, with due respect naturally for their own particular characteristics.

- *The 'Language and Culture of Origin' Programme (LCO)*

  It is also with integration in mind that the French Community has reached partnership agreements with Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal and Turkey, to enable schools that so wish to benefit from intercultural teaching provided by one or several teachers from these countries.

3. Actions to encourage the transition from school to working life

- *The Charter for Linked-work-and-training*

  Signed in 1993, the Charter aims to place young people who have opted for technical or vocational education and training, in real work situations. This can only be achieved with support from firms. While providing the central input to education and training, and retaining their responsibility for the award of qualifications, schools work with firms to train pupils for qualifications in line with a common scheme necessarily drawn up by both partners (schools and firms).

- *Partnership agreements between educational and industrial sectors, and cooperation agreements between schools/institutes*
  The aim of the former is to ensure that the education and training acquired at school corresponds to the reality of working life. These agreements provide, in particular, for training periods for pupils in firms, the basic facilities and infrastructure needed in schools, and regular contact with the relevant sectors, etc.

  The cooperation agreements provide for reciprocal arrangements which include a commitment by schools to introduce measures for enhancing the quality of education and training, and to make greater use of specific teaching materials and tools, with due regard for the kind of training desired.

- *Technological innovation centres*
  The 'Pôles d'innovation technologique' (PITech), as they are known, are special centres for training, information and documentation for pupils, students and teachers. Their purpose is to intensify cooperation between the different levels of education (as regards the education and training of students and teachers, but also the use of highly effective teaching tools and equipment), to strengthen the various stages of partnership between the worlds of education and business, and to adapt educational provision to the course of economic development.

- *The Community Commission for Professional Occupations and Qualifications*
  Established by the decree of 27 October 1994, the *Commission communautaire des Professions et des Qualifications* (CCPQ) has the task of determining the various forms of education and training or, in other words, 'the entire body of skills required for the award of the 'qualification' certificate at the end of secondary schooling'. Members of the Commission include partners from the world of education, and from firms and trade union organizations that either belong to the Conseil National du Travail (National Labour Council) or represent certain professional sectors.

GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

The significance of the concept

This concept has not so far been the subject of an official definition in the German-speaking Community. In reality, the expression 'lifelong education and training' is used to refer to continuing education and training.

No official definition, but reference to 'continuing education and training'

Aims and strategies

The aim of continuing education and training is to develop vocational, social and socio-cultural integration and, in particular, the following:

- the development or acquisition of basic knowledge, ranging from acquisition of the language to courses in computer science (compensating for gaps in education and training);
- the preparation of students for second chance education examinations;
- the acquisition of knowledge and skills which – possibly because of the optional and selective nature of the education system – have been somewhat overlooked (up to the 'university for senior citizens' stage);
- the updating of knowledge and acquisition of further qualifications with a view to full personal development, or to take advantage of greater equality of opportunity on the job market;
- diversifying the provision of education and training and adapting it to demand;
- cooperation with the FOREM (employment office) as regards measures for the unemployed.

Developing basic skills, offering a second chance, updating knowledge, diversifying provision and cooperating

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

- The encouragement of individual learning from earliest childhood and, in any event, from primary education onwards;
- measures against school dropout in full-time compulsory education or, in other words, primary school and the first stage of secondary education (remedial classes, core skills, teacher supervision, etc.);

Encouraging individual learning, fighting school dropout

Pilot projects

- Core skills (learning to learn) as part of the strategy;
- new information and communication technology: teacher training, school equipment and materials and future projects;
- new methods of organization and learning in full-time compulsory education (in-service teacher training).

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

The significance of the concept

No official definition, but reference to 'continuing education and training'

At present, each level and body in education and training is contributing to the establishment of a system that encourages lifelong learning. Nevertheless, no official definition or regulation regarding the activity has yet been drawn up.

Up till now, lifelong learning has been assimilated with the development of lifelong education and training for adults.

Aims and strategies

A study is currently in hand on the main features of the lifelong learning policy. The aim of this study, whose results are expected at the end of June 2000, is to outline several guiding principles and proposals for injecting substance into public policy for lifelong learning, and for the development of provision geared to learning.

Ongoing study, with political recommendations

It goes without saying that a greater number of concrete proposals regarding policies that should be implemented will emerge from the results of the foregoing study.

Strengthening the ability to learn to learn from primary education onwards

As already pointed out, lifelong learning has until now been assimilated with the development of lifelong education and training for adults. Although encouraging pupils to learn to learn is an aim of teaching in primary school and the first stage of secondary education, it is not yet tantamount to motivating them for lifelong learning.

The present and future aims of teaching (in the second and third stages of secondary education) have, therefore, to be tested in order to know how far they guarantee the acquisition by young people of the basic resources (skills and attitudes) they will need in order to want – and be able – to engage in lifelong education. The prime task is to encourage the adoption by people with few qualifications, of a positive attitude *vis-à-vis* lifelong education.

As a result, the Flemish Community is seeking to encourage the world of education, as a matter of urgency, to think about the extent to which the aims of teaching and plans for learning and school work in compulsory education, along with teacher training, take the challenges of learning to learn into account.

Emphasis on core skills

The Flemish Community plans to encourage the inclusion of 'core skills' in educational curricula at all levels. They include attitudinal, cognitive and psychomotor skills which, besides being relevant to following an occupation at a later stage, also contribute to the general personal development of pupils or students and, in some cases, may facilitate progress towards a succession of different kinds of occupational activity.

Flexibility and differentiation

The new policies to be implemented will encourage the development of differentiated and flexible learning pathways adapted to the different starting points and rates of learning of schoolchildren and students. The learning pathways for vocational secondary education, special education and education for 'social advancement' are gradually becoming distinct from each other as a result of the project for modularized courses (see below).

Division into modules

Bearing in mind the aim of lifelong learning and the new target groups in higher education to which it has consequently given rise, now is the time to break down higher education courses into modules and encourage innovation within them.

Skills recognition

At the same time, the Flemish Community is working to develop procedures for the validation, certification and establishment of equivalencies for skills acquired in special courses or as a result of professional experience.

The contribution of the different levels of education

Primary and lower secondary education

For lifelong learning to become a reality and not remain limited to adult education, as is currently the case, it is vital to develop the basic skills and attitudes necessary for this purpose from primary school onwards.

Aside from basic knowledge, pupils must also have the skills required to manage, organize and use the body of information available in the information society. This applies not only to skills for processing information, but skills and attitudes for communicative and social purposes, so that they can share this knowledge, pass it on and evaluate it critically.

The full social development of young people presupposes that they respect and learn to understand integrity and the different nature of others. Education must attempt to find a balance between a strategy that seeks, above all, to firmly consolidate individual identity and an approach in which everyone learns to respect differences in others. Social fulfilment also means that, beyond differences between persons, the desire and ability to take part in society by adopting civic responsible attitudes should be encouraged.

Development of basic, social and civic skills, through study of multidisciplinary topics

To do this, the Flemish Community has drawn up aims for teaching and development in primary and special education, and the first stage of secondary education. These aims have not only to do with the development of knowledge as such, but the acquisition of skills and attitudes backed by study of multidisciplinary topics.

The measures concerned have a threefold focus:

- to examine:
  - the social trends which may be significant when revising the aims for teaching and development in primary education and the first stage of secondary education;
  - the situation and circumstances required to achieve teaching and developmental objectives, along with current multidisciplinary topics;
- to support:
  - via the transmission of clear relevant information (information brochure);
  - by organizing priority provision for teachers to upgrade their knowledge, particularly as regards multidisciplinary topics in the second and third stages of secondary education;
  - through financial assistance for spreading good practice at school and in classes;
- to supervise:
  - by means of inspection, implementation and the achievement of teaching/developmental aims in general and multidisciplinary ones in particular.

Encouraging the spread of new ICTs in schools

Furthermore, the Flemish Community has adopted a policy of promoting the new information and communication technologies (ICTs), so that they are used on a daily practical basis in schools. Campaigns to boost information and awareness, courses to upgrade knowledge and subsidies for the infrastructure and funding of projects have been introduced.

Upper secondary vocational education

Scheme to modularize courses

This scheme has been implemented in a limited number of schools on an experimental basis since 1 September 1999.

The task in hand is to devise as many opportunities as possible for students to become qualified and attain maximum personal fulfilment in vocational courses provided in these schools. Achieving this has been made possible thanks to the full involvement of all relevant interests, including the administrative authority responsible for the school, its staff, participatory bodies and teaching departments, parents or their representatives, centres for pupil supervision, the social partners, consultative bodies and Flemish Community authorities.

Division into modules

Courses are based on the division of the different components of vocational training into modules.

Higher education

Development of flexibility, distance education and mobility between courses

As part of continuing education and training or lifelong learning, the achievement of real structured collaboration between the *Vlaams Instituut voor het Zelfstandig Ondernemen – VIZO* (the Flemish Institute for Independent Entrepreneurship), the *Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding* (VDAB, the service for employment and vocational training) and courses for 'social advancement' (EPS) are extremely important.

Furthermore, the Flemish government has to cooperate with the federal government to adapt the legal and regulatory framework.

The course structure of higher education is undergoing examination in the wake of recent international and social developments such as the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations.

Encouraging innovation projects

From the standpoint of lifelong learning, educational authorities also offer grant support to innovation projects in high education via the STIHO (Programme for the Encouragement of Innovation in Higher Education).

These projects provide for cooperation agreements between two or several universities, two or several higher schools, or between at least one university and one higher school (see the paragraph on pilot projects for the following activities):

- creation and development of efficient flexible quality learning environments;
- creation and development of new teaching methods and techniques;
- development of a database that teachers can use to assist their work;
- development and production of teaching materials and generic electronic tests;
- training teachers in the use of new teaching technology.

Adult education

Improved coordination with other levels of education

A new decree, which came into force on 1 September 1999, established adult education as far as possible along correspondingly similar lines to full-time secondary education, with maximum coordination as regards fields of study, courses and modules (course structure) and broad similarity between course patterns and levels.

The aim is that from secondary education it should be easy to move over to part-time adult education, and devise formal recognition arrangements for (partial) certificates, diplomas and other written evidence of study achievement.

DENMARK

The significance of the concept at national level

Lifelong learning means that everyone is learning at all stages of their existence and must have the possibility of updating their skills or acquiring new ones. The concept covers the whole spectrum of skills, whether general, vocational or personal.

The term 'learning' is used, among other things, to indicate that lifelong learning is not only intended to indicate the formal path through education delivered by an educational institution, but also covers all the informal opportunities to acquire new knowledge or skills.

It is concerned with a point of view that requires cooperation between the public and private sectors that will promote the continuing development of skills in the adult population. The objective is to support the efforts of the adult population to learn what is relevant and necessary, and enable people to realize their whole potential both in everyday life and the world of work.

Lifelong learning is nevertheless only possible when the adult population possesses a solid base acquired through education in school, upon which new learning can be based later. So young people's basic education, general and vocational, is therefore the basis for lifelong learning both from the point of view of the skills they learn then and the motivation to learn in the future.

Concerns general, vocational, and personal skills acquired in a formal or informal manner, while working for economic, democratic and 'quality-of-life' reasons, in the context of public/private cooperation

In the Danish context, lifelong learning:

- is first and foremost connected with adult education, on-the-job training and with the training system;
- adopts a broad perspective that includes objectives connected with economic policy and that of the job market, educational objectives that are democratic and favour participation, and objectives connected with individual development and quality of life;
- covers both formal and practical skills;
- requires a more conscious effort on the part of both employers and institutions, when it is a question of applying it in the place of work.

Aims and strategies

The long Danish tradition of education for all the people, or *folkeoplysning*[1], is a tradition that encourages openness to, and awareness of, lifelong learning.

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[1] *Folkeoplysning* is a form of adult education characterized by the student's freedom of choice, freedom of participation, freedom to take the initative, and freedom of choice on the part of the teachers/trainers. This open activity is organized by adult education associations, including some sports and youth associations. A *folkeoplysning* committee is established in each local authority.

A long tradition of adult education for the general public

For generations, this type of adult education has taught individuals to behave independently and to be responsible, elements that could be considered to be the foundation for the concept of lifelong learning. This tradition of learning the skills necessary for living and working has incidentally led Denmark to export its *savoir-faire* to some of the new democracies emerging in central and eastern Europe, including the Baltic States.

Every year, one in three Danes takes part in one way or another in adult educational activities or on-the-job training. Training networks are well developed and the geographical barriers have been reduced. A large range of skills and qualifications is accessible to satisfy all types of desires and needs.

A particular focus on responding to the requirements of the labour market

The current approach to lifelong learning is aimed both at general development, personal development and the development of qualifications related to the needs of the labour market. At the same time, in recent years, the necessity of matching skills in phase with the requirements of the market place has assumed increasing importance and has influenced Danish policies in the sphere of education considerably.

The public sector provides a wide range of training courses giving high-level qualifications and general and informal learning activities. Some of these activities are entirely financed and/or regulated by the public sector, others only partially.

The whole education system is involved and is focusing on measures for adult education

Danish policy on the question of lifelong learning is characterized in the following manner:
- focusing on the part of the population that only possesses low levels of qualification;
- development of training courses that enable the workforce to take up the challenge of working life at both technological and organizational levels;
- training all citizens in the new requirements for democratic participation;
- involving the whole of the education system so as to guarantee the development of personal, social, vocational and technical skills.

A 10-point programme

In 1995, the Danish government published a 10-point programme on recurrent education. The broad lines of this programme are as follows:

1. **To ensure that financial support for adult education is available to all Danish citizens and to take particular measures on behalf of those with a low level of education.**
   Matching supply with the demand of both learners and companies so that everyone has a choice of either finding something that will motivate them personally, or in what is necessary for meeting the requirements of the job market. Targeting financial support mechanisms on support for certain specific activities and on subsidizing registration fees. Giving institutions that are arranging courses the freedom to determine their own policy, including the

policy towards registration fees. Putting before parliament, during the year 2000, a specific legislative proposal to help adults who do not have basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.

2. **To extend the type and number of institutions offering training to adults.** Encouraging vocational colleges and tertiary education institutions to come up with proposals for adult training themselves[2]. Providing users with just what they want, thereby guaranteeing that demands and needs are matched. Adapting methods to the target public. Removing structural barriers to the provision of relevant training courses, establishing close cooperation between institutions to facilitate the spread of good practices, supporting research into teaching methods designed for adults, strengthening the dialogue between the Ministry of Education and the institutions, and improving the continuing education of those who teach adults.

3. **From compulsory education and upper secondary education, preparing a foundation that will encourage young people to consider education as a continuing process.** Developing the motivation and future desire for learning throughout initial education[3] and reviewing teacher training from this perspective. Reviewing curriculum content to take into account the rapid rate at which knowledge is changing (for example in the area of sustainable development). Developing a good balance between general and personal skills, on the one hand, and specialized knowledge on the other, so that adults are prepared to face the changes with which they will be confronted in the future.

4. **To encourage educational institutions to update the knowledge and qualifications acquired by their graduates in the course of their initial education (by guaranteeing the provision of 'refresher' courses).** Developing close contacts between the education/training institutions and the professional world, so they can offer training on recent innovations thereby appealing to that world. Integrating this system of 'refresher' training, over the next few years, into the contracts entered into between the Ministry of Education and tertiary-level institutions.

5. **To create better consistency and transparency by extending credit transfer systems; extending access at the responsibility of the participants.** Designing programmes that are sufficiently flexible so that it is always possible to have them follow on from other courses. Establishing less formal and more flexible admissions criteria, if necessary enabling people to make up any possible gaps as they go along. Basing credit systems on evaluations of level rather than precise academic knowledge and skills. Encouraging mul-

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[2] Since the introduction of this programme promoting lifelong learning, a dozen new degrees and about 15 Master's degrees have been created by tertiary education institutions.

[3] A variety of pilot projects are under way.

tidisciplinary approaches, while insisting on working methods and close study. Ensuring flexibility by having courses organized in the same modular way, to facilitate switches between work and study in accordance with need. Just before Christmas 1999, the parliament agreed on a new further education system for adults, the aim of which is to create a clear and transparent competency structure and consistency in further education programmes pursued by adults, and allow for skills development and further education organized in line with the starting point of the occupational and life experience of adult participants.

6. **To encourage adult education institutions and companies to be more cooperative and open to one another.** Seeing the needs of individuals and those of companies not as antagonistic, but complementary. Designing flexible courses, over short periods. Encouraging education institutions to motivate and direct companies, particularly SMEs, in planning the necessary training courses. Encouraging companies to express their strategic preoccupations to the world of education. Taking measures to facilitate the permanent participation of groups of staff in training systems, and thereby allowing a certain rotation on the job market whereby individuals without jobs temporarily occupy the positions of the staff who are training.

7. **To strengthen the cooperation between vocational training institutions, general education and adult education so that each contributes its own strong points.** Allowing learners to combine a variety of modules independently of the type of institution offering them, so that they meet their particular needs while enlarging their horizons. Providing these courses at local level so that the available resources are used to a maximum.

8. **To use new information and communication technology in education, in order to gain access to fresh knowledge throughout the world and offer more flexibility in the provision of courses.** The Danish Ministry of Education created the Centre for Technology-supported Learning (CTU) in 1995 as a resource centre, whose task it is to encourage education institutions to take up new distance technologies, provide training courses for teachers and take charge of a subsidies fund for this purpose.

9. **To develop and maintain a computerized 'catalogue' database that covers everything available in adult education.** This is an initiative of the Ministry of Education initially designed for people involved with careers guidance, and accessible to all who are interested (http://www.vider.dk). Producing a directory (courses, course content and financial support available, body and place, dates for registration, admissions criteria, the cost of registering, teaching material available and contacts) and access to interactive functions (possibility of registering, searches on several criteria, etc.).

10. **To set up a dynamic network of training courses for adults,** accessible with or without formal qualifications in advance, offering modules and certificated levels, combining standard and individually tailored courses. The Ministry of Education is setting up some working parties to study the question (learning in leisure time, possibilities of virtual learning, on-the-job learning, etc.).

In a general way, the Danish government has put a lot of effort into consolidating this view of lifelong learning, especially in specific legislative initiatives. In accordance with the philosophy of decentralization, these legislative measures are then brought into operation under the responsibility of the local authorities and institutions.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Compulsory and upper secondary education

Developing a solid knowledge base, curiosity, initiative and the desire to learn

The task of these two levels of education is to make it easy for people to take up lifelong learning by giving young people a solid knowledge base in fundamental subjects. They also have to develop the pupils' curiosity and sense of initiative in order to nurture the desire to return to education later in life, and continue to learn when necessary.

Higher vocational and university-level education

Here we are talking about making it compulsory for both branches of higher education to put forward proposals for updating the knowledge and skills of their (former) students.

Updating both knowledge and skills, modularizing curricula

It is also the responsibility of institutions at this level to create a new way of providing education, especially by devising a modular approach for 'made-to-measure' courses that meet the needs and wishes of users.

Adult education

Response to demand, flexibility, cooperation

Many of the arrangements envisaged by the programme designed to integrate the concept of lifelong learning into Danish education directly concern adult education (see 'objectives and strategies' above). A greater number of institutions are encouraged to participate in providing training for adults. The courses have to be developed in cooperation with users, in order to meet their needs effectively and have the necessary spatial and temporal flexibility. The teaching style also has to be made suitable for adults. Adult education institutions are being persuaded to support companies when they are planning the necessary courses. They are being encouraged to increase their cooperation generally, and to incorporate new technology.

Financial support

To further participation, financial support has been available since 1989 for adults with a low level of educational attainment who wish to take a career break for training. And in 1992, a training leave system was introduced. This system enables all employed, self-employed and unemployed members of an unemployment fund (i.e. people eligible for unemployment benefits) to get support for up to one year's training within a range of programmes (a positive list has been drawn up of programmes/courses for which this system can be used).

Additional arrangements

Other so-called 'transversal' measures have also been introduced hand in hand with the reform, across the Danish system of adult education.

Examples are the following:

Improving guidance

- as traditional arrangements for guidance have proved insufficient, **experiments have been carried out on different forms of open guidance in cooperation between the public employment service and the educational institutions**; these guidance centres are often provided in the form of 'guidance desks' set up in busy places; the need for better guidance has furthermore resulted in the establishment of a formal education programme, leading to the qualification of educational and vocational guidance counsellor;

Training teachers for their new role

- **teacher development programmes** (LUP), proposed by the ministry, to clarify the role of teachers at all levels of the education system; under the title *The teacher holds the key to innovation*, the programme insists on individualized education, extensive cooperation with the teacher, education management, the teacher seen as a tutor and the role of teachers in a multicultural society; a series of other initiatives also supporting this change in the role of the teacher: exchanges of teachers between vocational schools and training centres linked to the job market, etc.;

Improving older workers' qualifications

- a **training policy aimed at older people** who, for reasons of demographic change, will have to prolong their working life; training is intended to enhance the experience they have acquired while continuing to train them; arrangements for bringing their qualifications up to the required standards are necessary as many older people are formally less well qualified than their juniors;

Independence culture

- an **action plan for developing entrepreneurship throughout the school system** (from elementary school right up to tertiary education) giving due weight to personal qualities of courage and initiative, the culture of innovation connected with the use of ICT and working in a network, and tackling the matters necessary for developing an activity.

GERMANY

The significance of the concept at national level

No legal definition

There is no legal definition, in Germany, of the concept of lifelong learning as such. It has to be inferred, therefore, from the legislation underlying the different areas of education or training concerned.

Lifelong learning is considered to be an all-embracing concept arising from education or training policy, which is driven by the following principles:

- the mobilization of systems for learning and skills development for the benefit of a maximum number of persons;
- the encouragement and refinement of learning in real-life situations, which is especially favourable for groups previously excluded from education or training;
- the development of active learning processes which are responsive to the realities of daily life, and which learners control or structure themselves;
- special emphasis on the use of electronic and telematic learning networks conducive to more flexible forms of support and a far more extensive range of real and virtual study locations;
- the development of a reciprocal partnership between conventional education institutions and informal learning environments, in which the former become focal points for balanced provision overall, offering organization, guidance, consolidation, advice and support;
- encouragement of a fresh outlook on the part of people by promoting freedom of individual choice as regards the various forms of learning provision, as well as full use of all opportunities for education and training appropriate to a society fully geared to both.

Lifelong learning should ensure that citizens are able to develop and constantly upgrade their professional, personal and social skills, lead independent lives, contribute to the way society functions, and provide for their own professional advancement and existence. Far from being limited to the acquisition and recall of factual codified knowledge, it contributes to the comprehensive development of human proficiency through formal and informal learning activity.

An all-embracing concept arising from educational policy, and a plan for life

Lifelong learning is a vigorous plan for life, for which citizens should feel responsible. The content of education and training should meet the needs of individuals, regardless of circumstances and the stage in life they have reached. Teaching concepts, provision, and methods and formulas for learning should be adapted to particular areas of interest as well as to people's opportunities for learning, and be designed to motivate them.

In a learning society, education and training do not finish after a single period in life but represent a continuing task that requires contributions from all areas of education.

Aims and strategies

Strengthening of continuing education and the continuum comprising education and training, working life, and continuing education. Action to ensure diversity, quality and transparent provision, together with the equivalence of qualifications

In Germany, the goal of lifelong learning is pursued in conjunction with the strengthening of continuing education, the aim being to make this an area of education in its own right. Action along these lines is a central element in current proposals for reform. Actually achieving this aim calls for an exceptionally close interrelationship between education and training, working life and continuing education. It also implies that those without work should be involved in various forms of continuing education and training. Conditions appropriate to sound qualifications with suitable equivalence arrangements and transparency of educational and training provision, have, therefore, to be created while safeguarding the multiplicity and diversity of the market for continuing education. Furthermore, the education in civics, of young people and mature adults needs to be strengthened.

Reinforcing the autonomy of learners, putting all concerned in contact with each other

Effective lifelong learning presupposes the development of an exceptionally extensive learning culture which in turn requires:
- greater autonomy, motivation and self-discipline on the part of learners, as well as personalized encouragement, with the aim, in particular, of fostering equality of opportunity as regards access to such learning;
- the linking up of all educational fields and training institutions, including enquirers and users;
- the collaboration of the state services with the social partners, financially autonomous organizations and associations; *Konzertierte Aktion Weiterbildung* (concerted action for continuing education and training) was created for this purpose in 1987.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Compulsory education

Nearly all young people currently obtain a first certificate of general education or a vocational qualification. The education system is therefore already helping to ensure, via traditional education curricula, that young people become qualified. These qualifications are deemed as a prerequisite for them to take an active part in society and make use of the offers for lifelong learning.

Measures to promote lifelong learning are aimed in particular at:
- enabling people to switch between different courses;
- changing educational goals in the direction of independent acquisition of knowledge;

- motivating people to undertake lifelong learning, and
- getting as many young people and adults as possible involved in lifelong learning, in particular through expanding continuing education and through self-organized, self-directed learning.

Use of new approaches to teaching to impart basic skills and motivation for lifelong learning

The basic idea underlying lifelong learning is that learning to study is already consolidated at **school** and in the vocational training system, as a core skill. This skill is just as important in personality development as in relation to the new demands of the world of work. In its third 1994 recommendation on continuing education, the *Kultusministerkonferenz* (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany) emphasized, among other things, the close relation between school and continuing education in terms of content as well as method. To this end, schools are attaching increased importance to providing the basis for the understanding and motivation that are essential to lifelong learning. Meanwhile, one is witnessing development and experimentation with new forms of learning and teaching concepts, along with new methods and forms of delivery conducive to more informal learning in which learners themselves are in charge of the process. New forms of interaction between pupils and teachers are being implemented or strengthened and involve, for example, the targeted use of new information and communication technologies. Intervention of this kind is undertaken by the *Länder* given their responsibility in the area concerned. The federal government can support these developments, by financing pilot projects which, among other things, focus on the transition from school to vocational training.

Broad-based initial vocational training, ongoing learning at work and periods of continuing education throughout working life, are essential if people are to remain highly qualified, to adapt to the needs of the labour market and to refresh and deepen their skills in work-relevant areas, also with a view to returning to professional life. Initial vocational training is for the most part provided within the Dual System (in which around two-thirds of young people complete vocational training for a formal qualification). Professional expertise and the key multidisciplinary skills with which vocational training is necessarily concerned are acquired in the work process, whereas general and vocational education are provided in part-time vocational schools. The aim of vocational training in the Dual System which, in principle, lasts for three years is to develop comprehensive vocational skills enabling recipients of training to enter professional life as broadly qualified specialists.

Intensifying contact between training and the world of work

Lifelong learning means encouraging collaboration in partnerships between training bodies and firms, which intensify the contact of pupils and teachers with professional activity through placements in firms for pupils and the provision of in-service training for teachers on topics related to the world of work. In this respect, the content of training is centred on the ability to communicate, media-related skills, an enterprising mind and responsiveness to the world at large (acquiring a knowledge of foreign languages, periods spent abroad, cross-bor-

Strengthening personal skills

der cooperation). In the Dual System of vocational training, the training regulations for the in-company part of vocational training (federal legislation) and framework curricula for schools (*Länder* legislation) take account of these new requirements.

Continuing education and training[1]

The **field of continuing education and training**, apart from the *Volkshochschulen* (local adult education centres), is characterized by a very wide variety of providers, most of which are private companies. The laws on continuing education in the *Länder* have created an open area easy to access which takes account of differing needs and enables everyone to benefit from provision of this kind. Thanks to legislation on leave for training purposes, most *Länder* give employees an opportunity to take paid time off work provided they are receiving some form of continuing education or training.

In Germany, continuing education has become an area of education in its own right. This is an important element in achieving a lifelong learning strategy. By continuing education is meant an extension of, or return to, learning activity after completion of schooling and an initial period of vocational training – in principle after beginning some form of professional activity. Among other things, it covers the later acquisition of qualifications otherwise awarded by general education schools in evening classes, the acquisition of supplementary qualifications, as well as courses and various personalized activities, for example on political and cultural topics.

Transparency of provision, ease of access and overall consistency between initial and continuing training

The transparency of education and training provision, and ways in which it can be accessed, are of special importance to those who depend most on continuing education facilities. A closer relation therefore has to be established between initial and continuing education and training, and flexibility encouraged between all fields of provision. To this end, the fields must be more closely interrelated from the angles of structure, content and staffing. Creating overall consistency between training and continuing training should give rise to a flexible system, which rapidly integrates social, economic and technological changes and reflects them in its content.

The content of initial and continuing vocational training must include the world of work and social trends in a future-oriented perspective and react flexibly to changes as these appear. Qualitative and quantitative changes in the pattern of continuing training provision in Germany call for extensive cooperation, consensus and interrelationships between the many institutions responsible for the multiform structure of continuing education and training.

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[1] Continuing education and training are in general not covered by the present survey. However, certain basic elements of policy in this area are referred to as a reminder in the case of Germany, in so far as the strategy for lifelong learning is mainly targeted on vocational (including continuing) training.

Higher education

The 1998 amendment to the Framework Law concerned with regulating **universities and higher education institutions**, which is currently being applied in the *Länder*, took account of the increased importance of continuing education and training and its significance for lifelong learning. Continuing provision offered by universities may be distinguished in accordance with three basic models:

- postgraduate studies (further study, supplementary and follow-up courses) leading to a degree of *Diplom, Magister* or Master;
- continuing education and training courses leading to a leaving certificate;
- the in-service training of higher education staff.

Autonomy, flexibility, and a modular approach to strengthen the provision of continuing education and training in universities

In Germany, universities and higher education institutions offer over 1000 different kinds of continuing education and training. Besides seminars and conventional classroom teaching, university distance courses and, above all, courses based on the use of new technologies (Internet, CD-Rom) are gaining a foothold among the various kinds of provision. The increasing introduction of lump sum budgets/block grants (i.e. the autonomous use of financial resources) and opportunities for introducing modular courses give universities more room for manoeuvre. This leeway is apparent as regards the raising and award of resources, and also paves the way for the creation of Master's-level courses, and the award of the corresponding qualifications, which strengthens the provision of continuing education and training in universities and other higher education institutions.

Pilot projects

Numerous pilot projects are already being launched by the federal government and the *Länder*. An example is the *Lebensbegleitendes Lernen für Alle* ('lifelong learning for all') project of the *Bund-Länder Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung – BLK* (Joint Commission of the Federation and the Länder for Educational Planning). A part of this experimental programme, which is getting under way in the spring of 2000, has already been the subject of an agreement. The main ideas underlying the programme are that:

- learners should be given more responsibility and opportunities for self-guidance, through action to influence the content and forms of education or training, so as to encourage all citizens, including the less readily inclined, to undertake some form of learning activity;
- cooperation and partnership should be developed so that provision matches demand and the various areas of education and training are more integrated and associated with other sectors and policies, via the creation of networks and learning centres that learners can use on their own initiative.

58

This platform will be the starting point for measures geared to encouraging motivation and demand, creating conditions conducive to lifelong learning and improving the structure of its provision.

GREECE

The significance of the concept at national level

In Greece, there is no institutional framework or official body for lifelong education. The concept is perceived as a new strategy for transition towards the learning society. It is associated with many factors, bodies and policies and is concerned with the school environment, but also with the labour market, social life, the local community and the media.

A broad definition ...

By lifelong learning, here, is meant all organized methods and activities for formal and non-formal education, inside as well as outside the official education system, whether education is provided by public, private or social bodies.

... with reference to a multidimensional concept involving both formal and non-formal education, ...

Lifelong education is provided by means of policies and programmes directed primarily at adults (those aged over 16), as well as through concrete actions and measures associated with the upgrading of professional knowledge and skills, or the acquisition of fresh professional qualifications.

... mainly at adult level

Aims and strategies

The General Secretariat for Adult Education sets out the aims of lifelong learning in the following way:
- basic education and skills for adults;
- the fight against functional illiteracy;
- the improvement of employability;
- the education and instruction of certain adult sub-groups to prevent and fight social exclusion;
- the development of general adult education.

Strengthening basic skills, fighting illiteracy, enhancing vocational training and employability, avoiding social exclusion, ...

According to the Greek Open University, lifelong education is centred primarily on vocational training. However, it also has other aims as follows:
- the completion of basic education and the fight against illiteracy;
- social education (family relations, child education, hygiene, consumer issues, etc.);
- personal development (programmes concentrating on leisure-time and personal interests).

... and encouraging personal development

Finally, according to the Centre for Research into Education, lifelong education is also aimed at creating conditions that make it possible to access and leave all levels of education in a flexible way, irrespective of age or other barriers. The provision of continuing education by means of flexible procedures and facilities is a long-term aim, with a view to the still further development of lifelong education, the satisfaction of demand and an improved transition between school and the labour market.

Making the system more flexible to facilitate transition and two-way movement

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Pre-compulsory education

Improved access to pre-compulsory education

Access to pre-compulsory education has distinctly broadened in the course of recent years, and this is contributing to a decrease in school failure.

Compulsory education

The fight against school dropout by means of remedial schools

The extension of compulsory schooling up to the first level of secondary education (1976) has made it possible in the meantime to overcome illiteracy to a very considerable extent. Remedial schools due to be established will tackle the problems of illiteracy and school dropout more effectively still.

Extension of school education and an emphasis on core skills

Pre-compulsory, primary and secondary schools are contributing to the development of lifelong learning. They are doing so in particular through the development of core skills among pupils (formulation of aims, planning, communication, negociation, cooperation, learning to learn and to find several solutions, etc.), as a result of which they will be able to adapt and respond to changes and to the demands of the economic, social and technological context. Creative activities (pre-compulsory and primary schools), general lycées with several branches and horizontal teaching units, as well as methods of education based on participation and experience make the most significant contribution in this respect.

Post-compulsory upper secondary education

Flexibility to facilitate access and limit dropout

Upper secondary education offers a range of different courses both of a general kind and in the field of vocational and technical training. Lycées with evening classes lay on more flexible courses enabling young people who have already entered the job market to complete secondary education. Learning periods at vocational and technical schools may also be incorporated into courses of the OAED (the Organization for Manpower Employment). These are just examples of methods used to satisfy demand and limit possible dropout.

Higher education

Diversified provision

Higher education follows the same logic, in offering two major kinds of study option, namely the technical/vocational stream and the general stream. The last five years have witnessed the establishment of the Open University, optional study programmes and additional teaching programmes, as well as the broadening of university education, which has contributed to the involvement of a higher percentage of the population at this level of education.

There are also institutionalized courses for training and changes in specialization directed at various professional groups.

Creating an education system for adults

In general, the aim is also to improve education, irrespective of level, and to create an education system for adults.

Pilot projects

In the course of the last five years, the wish to introduce lifelong learning has led the public authorities to do the following:
- set up and implement the Open University;
- develop optional study programmes;
- provide additional teaching programmes.

Extending the development of lifelong learning is one of the aims of the 2000-2006 project which includes the following:
- broadening the operational and educational provision of the Open University;
- the provision of second chance schools and other forms of education for adults;
- the development of correspondence courses in higher technical schools, as well as higher education institutions.

SPAIN

The significance of the concept at national level

No official definition, but a frame of reference for the current reform of the system

The ongoing reform of the Spanish school system and all the legislation underlying it have taken account of the critical new demands that education will have to satisfy in the future, and fully provided for lifelong learning. Indeed, one might reasonably claim that the entire legal framework of the Spanish education system is rooted in this new concept. Thus Article 2 of the preliminary title of the 1990 LOGSE (Organic Law on the General Organization of the Education System) stipulates that '…the **basic principle** of the education system will be **lifelong education**. To this end, the system will prepare pupils to learn on their own initiative and facilitate the participation of adults in the various forms of education.'[1]

In its opening declaration, the LOGSE does not explicitly define the concept of lifelong learning even though the concept underpins the entire reform of the school system. The Law emphasizes that 'the breathtaking speed of changes of a cultural and technological nature and in the field of production mean that society will now be faced with the prospect of constant readaptation, updating and acquisition of fresh skills. As a result, education and training will assume a more comprehensive dimension than customary in the past. They will extend beyond the period in life to which they were previously confined, with an audience whose members have acquired active prior experience, and will alternate with professional life.'[2]

Wholehearted effort to ensure that a complex and highly abstract concept is put into practice

Subsequent legislative developments have taken account of the fact that the principle is a 'philosophy of education' so that it risks relegation to the category of good intentions. The abstract nature and complexity of the principle thus call for a concerted drive to put it into practice, if the foregoing declarations are to take the form of tangible actions and measures with a real impact on the children, young people and citizens in general for whom they are intended. Spanish legislation on education has therefore made every effort to refer to lifelong education as one of the priority aims of each level of education, and to provide for concrete measures in order to achieve them.

Aims and strategies

Reaching the greatest possible number, compensating for inequalities, improving

The principle of lifelong learning in the Spanish education system is associated with the following objectives:

- extending the right to education, and exercise of this right, to a much greater number of citizens, by organizing education more comprehensively in a way consistent with gradual diversification;

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[1] Unofficial translation from the Spanish, by the EEU.

[2] Preamble to the LOGSE (unofficial translation from the Spanish by the EEU).

the transition from school to working life, nurturing democratic education and moral values and developing adult education

- providing for fairness in education by avoiding discrimination and compensating for inequalities;
- encouraging the transition between education and the world of work;
- developing in citizens a willingness to take responsibility and a civic sense, by nurturing moral values and democratic reflexes;
- doing what is necessary to ensure that adults can acquire, update, supplement or broaden their knowledge and skills in the interest of their professional and personal development.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Pre-compulsory education

Broadening access and the percentage of children at school

The measures deployed at this stage in the context of lifelong education are primarily concerned with broadening access and the level of enrolment. Almost 100% of children aged 4 and 5 attend school, while the attendance rate of those aged 3 stood at over 60% in the 1995/96 school year. School enrolment of children under 3 is much lower, so it is worth investing effort in greater educational provision for the youngest – an action undoubtedly planned for the future.

Early action where special educational needs are encountered

Teams that provide psychological and pedagogic guidance are one of the practical resources of the Spanish school system for placing the very youngest children at the outset on an educational pathway they will follow for the rest of their lives. These teams assume responsibility for tutoring, taking appropriate early action and, where necessary, diagnosing particular educational needs associated with a specific (sensory, motor or psychic) handicap.

Compulsory education

Guidance services and tutoring strategy

The most important actions arising from this aim of continuing education relate to the establishment of support facilities to personalize education, by adapting it to the needs of each child. These facilities are provided by **school guidance services**. In basic (as in pre-compulsory) education, school administrative authorities set up special services for tutoring and psychological and pedagogic school guidance to ensure good quality teaching and, at the same time, provide for personalized teaching while considering the personal development and individual characteristics of pupils. During this stage, teachers in their role as tutors are responsible for the way pupils are guided. From that point onwards, the **tutoring strategy** contains measures which help pupils fit into the life of their school and encourage communication with their families. Similarly, teachers are responsible for smoothing out the learning difficulties of pupils and adapting their curriculum. They must also work jointly with the guidance team.

From a further angle, the **new curricula**, which are an integral part of lifelong education, are based on the principle that education is more than mere instruction. Accordingly, content has not only to do with *concepts* but *procedures*, know-how and *attitudes*, which embrace norms and values. Education for values is included on the basis of 'cross-curricular themes'. These take account of fields that were formerly isolated and compartmentalized. The topics are **moral and civic education, education for peace, equality between the sexes, environment, health and sex education, road safety education** and **consumer education**. These themes are selected on the basis of their ability to extend beyond the period of schooling and be part of an educational model conducive to progress in the fight against discrimination and inequality, and also fully part of a strategy contributing to lifelong learning.

Emphasis on learning processes and introduction to horizontal topics of a civic and moral nature

Moreover, adaptations to the curriculum are possible for pupils who have **special educational needs** and measures are introduced if children do not achieve the goals that have been set. School authorities decide whether it is necessary to bolster the team of teaching staff with a team of specialists in educational therapy, listening skills and speech acquisition.

Taking account of special educational needs

Besides these general measures, ordinary and special pathways have been introduced into **compulsory secondary education** as part of a policy for lifelong learning. Here the aim is to encourage appropriate provision for all pupils by means of an open flexible programme model, while taking account of the many different kinds of pupil. Pathways range from the establishment of a growing selection of options throughout compulsory secondary education, to the adaptation of courses and, finally, the possibility of introducing diversified education and training provision during the final phase of this stage.

In practice, these principles are enshrined in a series of concrete measures for pupils in secondary education:

- **options and diversification:** these measures involve adapting education to the diversified needs and interests of pupils. The curriculum includes optional subjects which become increasingly important as compulsory secondary education progresses;
- **academic and professional guidance:** the aim here is to encourage the personal development of pupils and their ability to take decisions about their academic and professional future. It is offered in practice by tutors and departments of guidance in schools;
- **adaptations and diversification of the curriculum:** this implies changes in the methodology and the teaching material used, as well as in the sequential structure and organization of content, etc. If pupils do not achieve the general aims set for this stage in spite of the adaptations carried out, diversification is put into practice in a way that involves three out of ten subjects in the basic course, and includes educational elements from the fields of social linguistics and science/technology;
- **'Garantía Social' programmes:** pupils unable to continue their studies because they have no certificate at the end of compulsory education can gain

Diversification, guidance and assistance with the transition from school to working life

admission to these courses to help them enter the world of work; the courses offer minimum basic education and vocational training enabling them either to become involved in active life or to continue their studies.

Upper secondary education

Diversification, guidance, taking account of special needs for general upper secondary education

The specific measures linked to the concept of lifelong learning may be sub-divided into three main groups:

- **training options:** in the *Bachillerato,* pupils may follow one of the four options offered to them in accordance with their skills and academic and professional interests;
- **responsibilities of tutors and guidance departments** are especially significant as regards the various educational options and the transition from the school system to the world of work;
- **adaptation of the curriculum for pupils with special needs:** measures have been introduced ranging from necessary curricular adaptations to exemption from studying particular subjects in certain cases.

Guidance, closer relations between schools and firms, and taking account of pupils with special needs for vocational secondary education

In **vocational secondary education**, one of the priority aims is that pupils should acquire a professional maturity and identity that motivate them to consider new forms of learning, and enable them to adapt to possible changes in qualifications. Besides the general measures already mentioned, there are other specific measures implemented at this level such as **an increasingly close relationship between schools and firms**, both of which are complementary as far as the acquisition of knowledge is concerned. Within school counselling departments, a member of the teaching staff is specifically responsible for career guidance; furthermore, the social partners are involved in the planning and management of vocational training via what is known as 'joint training', in so far as it entails close relations and an exchange of services between the production sector and the school system. This activity assumes tangible form in a series of initiatives such as joint development, by school administrative authorities and the world of work, of a catalogue of professional qualifications containing the different kinds of training that the school system is meant to provide.

Vocational training also includes measures intended for **pupils with special needs**, so that they can be trained in accordance with their potential.

Higher education

The development of an exceptionally varied range of provision with easy access and no age limit, which involves the physical presence of teachers or distance methods and is in direct contact with the world of work, etc., plays its part in consolidating the principle of lifelong education. In the last 20 years, the growth in enrolment at Spanish universities has been spectacular, thanks to the effort invested in extending education to the greatest possible number of citizens.

Among concrete measures in university higher education which have been introduced to strengthen the principle of continuing education, are the following:

Increasing numbers of students and options

- **an increase in the number of options:** this increase in choice has helped people find an answer to their specific needs in the area of lifelong education and training;
- **an increase in the offer of specialized vocational courses:** postgraduate training is for those with Bachelor-level degrees and other qualifications, with a very distinct emphasis on the professional application of knowledge acquired during the time spent at university;
- **a broad range of distance university study opportunities** at the National University for Distance Education (UNED): students enrolled at the UNED account for approximately 8% of all university students;
- **specific university provision for the retired:** this measure, which is already being implemented in some Spanish universities and is very definitely an aspect of the principle of lifelong learning, represents an attempt to encourage development of the intellectual and personal potential of older people in a university context.

Adult education[3]

Acquiring or updating basic education and training, and developing the ability to take part in the life of society

In Spain, adult education is inspired by the principle of lifelong education, and seeks to facilitate the admission of adults into the various forms of education offered by the system. The priority aims are the acquisition and updating of basic education and training, the improvement of professional qualifications or completion of the groundwork necessary to carry out other forms of professional activity, and development of the abilities needed to take part in the life of society, as well as in economic, political and cultural activity.

The choice of education and training programmes for adults is very broad, and is spread across all levels of the school system with a division into two fundamental categories: face-to-face provision (with direct teacher/student interaction) and distance education.

Face-to-face education and training covers:

- *the initial stages of basic education for adults*, the general aims of which are to provide them with the essential knowledge, ability, skills and techniques for their professional, social and personal advancement. Basically, there are two levels, the first of which (level I) introduces them to techniques for learning to read, write and perform arithmetical calculations, thereby enhancing their linguistic and mathematical ability. The second level (II) gives access to secondary education;

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[3] Although **adult education** is not regarded as a formal level of education, it is referred to here because of the breadth of its provision at all levels of the Spanish education system.

- *courses leading to the award of the school certificate* enable adults to access different levels of the school system. When they obtain this certificate, they can embark on the second stage of compulsory secondary education;
- *work for first-level non-school vocational training exams*, following which it is possible to obtain the diploma of Assistant Technician leading to second-level vocational training and experimental vocational modules at level II, as well as to the first module of the LOGSE Baccalaureate and intermediate stages of training;
- *secondary education for adults*, following which they may obtain the secondary education certificate;
- *literacy in the Spanish language or courses in Spanish for immigrants.*

Face-to-face technical and educational provision concerns the following:

- *work for first-level non-school vocational training exams*, which leads to the diploma of Assistant Technician in first-level vocational training. These courses make it possible to obtain qualifications that are essential for entering employment;
- *technical vocational training in workshop classes*. This kind of training is for workers or the unemployed anxious to upgrade their training and vocational qualifications.

Distance education includes:

- *education leading to the award of existing basic certificates* (school certificate, secondary education certificate);
- *specific distance vocational training*, currently subject to major changes; at present, there are two main kinds: experimental vocational modules (now to be abolished) and the stages of specific vocational training;
- *distance secondary education* for those aged over 18 who wish to obtain the secondary education certificate. It was introduced for the first time in the 1998/99 school year;
- *admission of adults to higher education. University entrance examinations for persons aged over 25*, which are organized by each university, are intended for those in this age category who do not have the necessary qualifications for university entrance.

Finally, one of the most important packages of measures for lifelong learning and upgrading the knowledge of citizens comprises all forms of provision parallel to that of the Ministry of Education, which are offered by the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs or the Ministries of Employment in the Autonomous Communities. They include vocational training courses within the National Plan for Training and Entry into Professional Life (the 1993 FIP Plan) and the 'workshop schools' programme. Collectively, all these modules are known as *Formación profesional ocupacional* ('occupational' vocational training).

Official language schools

Language schools exist throughout Spain, and their courses are intended for all citizens who have completed compulsory education. These centres offer courses in Spanish for foreigners, and in the other official languages spoken in Spain (Catalan, Basque, Galician and Valencian), along with different foreign languages (German, Arabic, Chinese, Danish, French, Greek, English, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Dutch, Portuguese, Romanian and Russian). Teaching is divided into two stages (lower and upper) and, in either case, it may be provided within the official system (in the above-mentioned language schools), or in the independent sector in return for the annual organization of tests needed for assessment purposes.

The government decides on the minimum core curriculum content for languages taught in official language schools. Following the elementary stage and satisfactory performance in the corresponding examination, pupils obtain an academic certificate stating that they have fulfilled the set requirements.

The general aims of the elementary stage enable pupils to acquire core skills in using and understanding the language studied, in either spoken or written form, so that they can use it to communicate in everyday situations, and gain an insight into cultural aspects of countries where it is spoken, which are liable to have an influence on the most frequently encountered social situations. As to the higher stage, its main aim is to develop the creative abilities of pupils in the use of the language to a level at which they understand it and express themselves more flexibly and subtly.

Pilot projects

The following are some of the most relevant pilot projects related to lifelong learning currently being implemented in Spain:

- **the 'Aldea Digital' project for the integration of rural schools into the communication networks:** its aim is to enhance the educational use of technological resources in such schools, so that the isolation of pupils in rural areas can be reduced by their being in contact with pupils from other countries who also speak other languages. This project started in 1998.

- **'Teleeducación en Aulas Hospitalarias' project:** hospital classrooms provided with computer equipment have been set up in order to create a space where learning, communication and mutual support can be developed so that pupils can break out of the isolation of their hospitals. Internet access and special software are also provided. This project started in 1997.

- **'Averroes', the Andalusian telematics educational network:** this network offers new educational resources to teachers and students in order to fulfil the expectations that ICTs have raised in the educational communitiy. Other Autonomous Communities have also developed their own projects in telematics. 'Averroes' started in 1998.

- **Official distance teaching of the English language, 'That´s English':** this programme can be followed by students over 18 years of age, and is the only distance programme of language teaching leading to an official certificate. The teaching of French is also planned for this programme which started in the 1993/94 school year.

FRANCE

The significance of the concept at national level

A broader view of continuing training

France uses the concept of 'lifelong education and training', which takes up and extends the idea of 'continuing training' made official by the important 1971 law currently undergoing revision.

As part of the process of reforming this law, a report on vocational training was prepared by the State Secretariat for Women's Rights and Vocational Training set up by the Prime Minister in 1999. It defines entitlement to lifelong education and training as a 'collectively guaranteed transferable individual right':

- an 'individual right' means that individuals may at any time use their established rights, but that they may also develop their training plan in a negotiated way so as to gain access to provision corresponding both to their personal aims and aims or strategies determined by their firm, their sector or the area in which they live;
- a 'transferable right' means that what has been acquired within a firm is not lost where there is occupational mobility;
- a 'collectively guaranteed right' means that, in order to be practicable, the system has to be based on an even pooling of resources, but also that the rights to which all are entitled may vary in scope depending on individual circumstances.

Aims and strategies

France has established the following aims regarding lifelong education and training:

- a sound interrelationship between initial and continuing education and training, which implies that:
  - the former should not be thought of as an 'encyclopaedic' undertaking, but as the gateway to a general and/or technological grounding and body of knowledge;
  - continuing education and training should take account of what has been achieved in the initial stages and concentrate on the acquisition of further knowledge and skills, including the validation of acquired skills;
  - qualifications may be acquired by accumulating credits from initial education and training through to continuing education and training. Indeed, the pathways for continuing provision should lead to qualifications which are then recognized in collective negotiation and on the labour market. France is in particular seeking to express these vocational qualifications in terms of credits, so that anyone undergoing initial training, apprenticeship, continuing training or in-company activities has only to aim for par-

Improving the interrelationship between initial and continuing education and training

  tial qualifications which can then be supplemented with individually selected courses leading to the full degree, diploma or certificate required.
  - lifelong education and training should go hand in hand with regular opportunities for making fresh choices and for skills appraisal;

Validating vocational experience

- the positive aspects of vocational experience may be validated. Such validation is a priority of the Ministry of Education, Research and Technology, as part of its development strategy for lifelong education and training.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Compulsory and post-compulsory education

Priority educational areas and sectors, and a new 'fresh opportunities' programme to prevent young people leaving school unqualified

As part of the lifelong learning strategy, the Ministry of Education is carrying out a policy to improve the system, which is more responsive to the needs of pupils, in particular to prevent them from leaving school early without qualifications. This policy is based on the early schooling of children, individual patterns of learning, support for the most vulnerable pupils, education for citizenship, and the introduction of integrated vocational courses that depend on partnership with professional sectors and regional or local authorities. It is strengthened in educational priority areas and sectors, and extended through the *Nouvelles chances* ('fresh opportunities') programme for young people who leave the school system unqualified (57,000 in 1998/99), or who are likely to do so.

The 'fresh opportunities' programme is intended for young people who leave a class in lower secondary education, special education, or the first-year of preparation for a *brevet d'études professionnelles* (BEP, or certificate of vocational studies) or a *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP, or certificate of vocational aptitude), as well as those who drop out after one year at a general or technological *lycée*, or who do so while actually completing compulsory schooling – a group whose numbers are very difficult to determine accurately. The programme seeks to offer these young people patterns of training geared to their individual needs and, wherever possible, to ensure a joint contribution by schools and business to qualifying and integrating them. The programme is particularly concerned to avoid breakdowns in individual schooling at the *collège* stage (lower secondary education), and to provide training courses leading to the CAP.

Three principles govern this programme:
- made-to-measure courses and responses to the individual needs of each young person, given that the difficulties and causes of school breakdown are varied and complex;
- scope for initiative and support for innovation by upgrading the contribution of teachers working together in the field, and giving their projects, methods and results a higher profile, through analysis and evaluation of their experience and identification of the different kinds of problem that hinder their

activity (financial arrangements, legal difficulties, a narrow regulatory framework, etc.);

- action in partnership between central government departments, regional and local authorities, associations and the world of work (firms and occupational sectors), to assist young people in their transition from school to working life, by means of an ongoing joint effort on the part of schools and firms.

Its aims are as follows:

- greater familiarity with the school population concerned (improved data-gathering via appropriate statistical mechanisms, monitoring systems in each school or catchment area, bringing different players together to exchange information, and the development of research on this specific target group to improve understanding of early school dropout);
- prevent breakdowns in schooling at *collège* through a variety of arrangements (personalized support to each pupil in daily classroom activity, introduction of special support classes, and temporary classes for young people on the verge of dropout with a view to their gradual reintegration into mainstream school activity); facilitate access to qualifications for pupils in sections for 'adapted' general and vocational education (by providing three-quarters of young people in adapted education with opportunities to continue their training in vocational *lycées*, apprenticeship training centres, or regional schools for adapted education – public-sector institutions which take in residential pupils, and may combine the teaching facilities of a primary school, *collège*, vocational *lycée* and general *lycée* – within three years, reducing regional inequalities in this area by means of a survey to identify current deficiencies, and reforming the sections for 'adapted' general and vocational education); develop pilot locations for looking after and reintegrating children under 16 who have missed compulsory schooling (six ongoing pilot projects);
- develop post-*collège* patterns of training for qualifications, by maintaining and diversifying stage-by-stage certification procedures for the CAP, through the establishment of networks of vocational *lycées*;
- strengthen specific initiatives in the array of measures generally concerned with the integration of pupils at school, by developing indicators for improved coordination of the effort involved, increasing the provision of training for which schools and firms are jointly responsible, and the numbers of those who benefit from it, etc.;
- diversify level 5[1] training provision by making it denser, taking qualitative aspects more fully into account and developing partnerships with firms and the regions through the joint preparation of multiannual training plans;
- bring the 'fresh opportunities' programme within the scope of similarly directed European initiatives.

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[1] Following the ISCED classification.

New ICTs and the Internet in most schools

In addition, to facilitate the ability of young people to adapt to economic and technological changes, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are to be introduced more intensively into schools. All *lycées* and *collèges* and 40% of primary schools are being connected to the Internet in the year 2000.

Developing the validation of professionally acquired expertise with formal paper qualifications

Furthermore, the Ministry is continuing to develop arrangements for validating vocationally acquired expertise with formal paper qualifications. From this standpoint, the 20 July 1992 Law on this kind of validation has introduced an all-important innovation in the award of technological and vocational diplomas and similar qualifications. All those who have followed a form of professional activity corresponding to such a qualification for five years, may obtain exemption from the qualifying examinations on the grounds of experience. The activity concerned may have been pursued in more than one capacity, such as that of salaried employee, craftsman, self-employed person, etc. An individual response to adults involved in active life who wish to obtain formal qualifications, the validation of professional expertise is an inevitable aspect of the entire lifelong education issue. By introducing this entitlement, the Ministry is effectively acknowledging that working in itself leads to skills and knowledge on a par with conventional education and training. An official value is accordingly attached to the gains accruing from professional experience by a body external to firms.

Higher education

Reducing failure and dropout

With the same idea of preventing premature dropout from the system, different reforms of the organization of the first stage of university studies have been initiated to help encourage a fall in the failure rate. They have involved introducing an initial six-month 'guidance' stage in all courses for the *Diplôme d'études universitaires générales* (DEUG, or first general university diploma), points at which students can change their subject preferences, much wider use of teaching in small groups and the development of tutoring for first-stage students by students at the second stage of their university course, and postgraduates.

The award of vocational degrees

The French government is also concerned that the vocational dimension of higher education courses should be strengthened by continuing to extend vocational courses in the university institutes of technology, the higher technicians' sections, the university vocational institutes and engineering schools, and the introduction of periods spent in firms in general scientific and literary courses. A *licence professionnelle* (vocational degree) has been devised quite recently to encourage easier entry to the labour market. It will be introduced with effect from the 2000-2001 academic year. Lasting a year (subject to particular provisions related to teaching), work for the qualification combines and interrelates theoretical and practical and finalized components, learning about methods, materials and tools, and training periods in a professional environment. The teaching involved for this *licence* is to be offered in initial and continuing training, and provided in accordance with a linked-work-and-training pattern that alternates time spent in training institutions and at the workplace. Varied course packages are being prepared to take account of the experience and special needs of students from different backgrounds. This *licence* is being awarded by universities on their own, or jointly with other public bodies providing higher education and authorized to do so by the Minister for Higher Education.

Pilot projects

Besides the 'fresh opportunities' programme (see above), a variety of initiatives and pilot projects have been implemented by the public authorities, namely the Ministry of Education, Research and Technology, the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity, and the Secretary of State for Women's Rights and Vocational Training. They correspond to implementation of the broad guidelines of the 1999 National Action Plan for Employment.

Within this framework, different forms of experimental activity have been undertaken with regions and vocational sectors since 1999:

- with regional councils on topics related to the creation of networks of services for vocational guidance and the validation of expertise, the cross-sectoral mobilization of various sources of funding for adult education or the development of qualifications and training in small and medium-sized entreprises (SMEs);
- with vocational sectors, in which forms of experimentation will be concerned with bringing systems of public and vocational certification more into line with each other, identifying patterns of vocational training for young people, and the development of schemes for equal opportunities for access to training and qualification in firms, particularly SMEs.

These different kinds of experimentation are giving rise to contractual arrangements between the central government, the regions and professional sectors, involving quantified aims and procedures for evaluating the results. A second stage for the development of these measures is in hand. It is concerned with introducing more flexible procedures, and doing so on the basis of contracts with professional sectors and firms.

The Ministry of Employment and Solidarity and the Ministry of Education are cooperating to develop conveniently located centres throughout the country for coordinated training that leads to specific qualifications or is validated with a diploma. This is the case in particular of the *Association de formation professionnelle pour adultes* (AFPA, or the Association for Adult Vocational Training) the *Groupements d'établissements publics d'enseignement pour la formation continue des adultes* (GRETAs, or groups of public-sector bodies for continuing adult education and training) and the universities. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education is strengthening its provision of continuing training in secondary schools and higher education institutions, through an entire range of personalized services, calls to initiate projects, and the signature of four-year contracts between the Ministry of Education and higher education institutions combining the development of continuing education and training, and adapting the provision of training and the use of new educational technologies to each other. Continuing education and training provided by the Ministry of Education will be increased so as to offer 15,000-20,000 days of counselling to individuals and organizations, raise from 20% to 30% the number of those benefiting from personalized forms of training, increase from 36 to 50, the number of official designations for such arrangements, and increase to 100 the number of conveniently located centres for embarking on open and distance education and training.

Finally, different initiatives have been undertaken to facilitate adaptation to technological changes. Among them are schemes for the development of ICTs in education over a three-year period, the reform of vocational education, bringing engineers into schools to strengthen relations between firms and schools, reinforcing the vocational dimension of university courses (university institutes of technology, the *diplôme d'études spécialisées*, etc.), the establishment of an Education/Economy/Employment Mission to act as an observatory of professional sectors and a body for forecasting the impact of economic trends on the needs of the education system, the development of technological exchanges between schools and firms, and greater openness of apprenticeship to men and women alike, etc.

These measures, some of which have been implemented for some years by the Ministry of Education, have been part of the National Action Plans for Employment since 1998.

IRELAND

The significance of the concept at national level

All formal or informal learning activities

In identifying priorities for lifelong learning, the National Employment Action Plan for Ireland 1999 contextualized the elements of a lifelong learning strategy within the Employment and Labour Market Committee definition: 'all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence.'

This implies the need for a continuum of education and training opportunities from early childhood, through to and throughout adulthood, with a strong emphasis on creating a systemic approach which coordinates the different levels of provision within an overarching framework of qualifications. Key attention to supporting a smooth transition for participants between the different levels of the system, to improving the interface between education and training, and the development of formal progression pathways, is an important part of this approach. Enhancing quality through a learner-centred approach allied with the development of supporting services such as guidance, psychological assistance and childcare are also seen as important.

A number of national government and official documents have avowed a commitment to lifelong learning as a process of learning along a lifecycle continuum from the cradle to the grave. The *Report of the Commission on Adult Education: Lifelong Learning* (1984) and the *Report of the National Education Convention* (1994) were the earlier documents to draw attention to lifelong learning. During the Irish presidency of the European Union (1996), the Irish Ministry for Education promoted the EU *Strategy for Lifelong Learning* adopted by the Council of Ministers, in 1996. In the past three to four years, a growing momentum has given greater emphasis in public policy towards lifelong learning as instanced in the government white paper on *Human Resource Development* (1997), the Government green paper on adult education, *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning* (1998), the Employment Ireland Action Plan (1999), the report of the Economic and Social Council (NESC) *Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice* (1999), and the *National Development Plan* (1999).

The recently published green paper on adult education, *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning* (1998), adopted the three-dimensional view of lifelong learning as elaborated by Rubenson[1] (1998), namely 'lifelong', 'lifewide' and 'motivation'.

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[1] RUBENSON, K. (1998), *Adult Education and training: The Poor Cousin – An analysis of reviews of National Policies for Education*, OECD, University of British Columbia and Linkoping University.

Developing seamless interfaces between levels and transition points

Lifelong: first, in lifelong learning, people continue a process of further learning and self-education throughout their lives. A concern with lifelong learning involves a concentration not only on post-compulsory education but also, and crucially, on the school experience. The need for a seamless interface between different levels of the education system, and for a focus on the transition points within the system and between it and work, also emerges as important.

Integrating a multiplicity of ways of learning

Lifewide: second, the notion of lifewide learning recognizes the multiplicity of learning influences and sites outside the formal education system. An increasing engagement in non-formal education activities (both in the sense that they happen outside the formal system and that they happen in an informal way) poses challenges of providing accessible and flexible modes of accreditation and certification which maintain quality standards. The range and diversity of learning sites and providers can also make coordination and integrated support difficult.

Providing learner-centred approaches and quality

Motivation: the third attribute concerns the motivation to learn and the capacity to do so. This raises questions of the quality of the school experience and also of the overall quality of the individual's environment and daily lived experience. At every level of the system, it is vital that learning opportunities offered are relevant to the cultural and community context and values of participants, and reflect their needs and interests. Issues of timing, access, environment, teaching methods and the quality of tutor/student relationships are an intrinsic part of this process.

Shifting the adult education debate into a lifelong learning framework raises issues of the relationship between the different levels of education, the transitions between these levels and the ease of transfer between work and education. As stated above, a concern with learning through the life cycle also raises questions concerning the quality of the school experience in learning how to learn, as well as raising the issue of increased expenditure on education through the life cycle.

Aims and strategies

Optimizing participation at all levels of the education system, preventing early school leaving, developing second chance education and enhancing support services

The main aims are:

- early intervention to **optimize participation in initial education and training**, particularly for those who are disadvantaged, maximizing retention rates to completion of upper secondary education or equivalent;
- strategies to **prevent and address early school leaving**;
- **curricular reforms** to ensure ongoing quality, relevance and choice in line with changing social and economic needs;
- the **development of second chance education and training, and a national adult literacy strategy**, particularly for adults with less than upper second-level education;
- the **enhancement of supporting services**, such as guidance, psychological services, childcare etc., as resources become available;

- **increasing participation in third-level education** in line with social and economic needs, with a particular emphasis on supporting access for those who are disadvantaged;
- **enhancing the responsiveness of the education system and training in supporting workplace learning** through the involvement of industry and social partners in national fora for curriculum design, standards setting and assessment, the encouragement of local education/training industry links, increased flexibility and part-time and modular provision, the development of mechanisms for accreditation of prior learning and work-based experience within a national qualifications framework, and tax relief for part-time third-level students.

As stated, the Irish government published the first green paper on adult education since the foundation of the State, in late 1998. It is planned to publish the country's first white paper on the same theme early in 2000.

In December 1999, the government published the first white paper on early childhood education, *Ready to Learn*. This espouses a holistic, child-centred approach to the pre-school and early school child.

Providing a unified structure for accreditation and certification

Concerns with qualification culs-de-sac have also been central to the country's lifelong learning debate. The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) provided for the establishment of a National Qualifications Authority and a national qualifications framework, and the implementation arrangements are now under way. This will provide a unified structure for accreditation and certification of all non-university vocational education, and training at further and higher education levels for both the education and training sectors. It will provide a national framework of levels of qualification, and ensure formal progression pathways to higher levels of education and training. The Authority will also develop mechanisms for the accreditation of prior learning and work-based learning, for the accumulation of credits on a modular basis, and facilitate the international recognition of awards. Universities will be obliged to facilitate access, transfer and progression arrangements for holders of the Authority's awards. Recognition of the qualifications of private colleges will also fall within the remit of the Authority.

Increasing mature student participation

The challenge of increasing mature student participation rates in higher education in Ireland is a recurring theme in a number of policy documents and reports, including the *Report of the Higher Education Authority Steering Committee* (1995); *Adult Education an Era of Lifelong Learning* (1998); *Commission on the Points System* (1999); *Higher Education: The Challenge of Lifelong Learning* (1999). For a variety of reasons, Ireland has one of the lowest levels of mature student participation in higher education within the OECD. This is true both of the university and technological sectors. The final report of the Commission on the Points System (1999) recommended that, by the year 2005, each institution should set aside a quota of at least 15% of places for students entering at the age of 23 or above.

Avoiding skills shortages

Skills shortages are emerging as a threat to the current high growth rates in the Irish economy. Such shortages, combined with significant absolute decline in the numbers of school leavers, means that the economy must increasingly look to upskilling those currently in the workforce to meet its emerging skill requirements. It is likely that the forthcoming white paper on adult education will identify a number of policy initiatives in this regard.

The government in its recent budget (December 1999) established a training fund based on a levy on some employer categories for the purposes of upskilling the workforce. This fund will amount to about EUR 150 million a year. This replaces existing apprenticeship and training levies and will be directed primarily towards an increase in provision of apprenticeships and traineeships.

An expert group on future skills needs, which includes business, higher education, policy makers, research/manpower authorities, government departments and state agencies, has been established by the government to report on emerging skills needs and make recommendations as to how to address them. This is supplemented by a business/education and training partnership forum and a management implementation group.

Addressing adult literacy needs

The OECD International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS, 1997) drew attention to the low literacy levels of Irish adults. Investment in addressing adult literacy needs has increased sixfold since then, with the core objective of developing the capacity of the adult literacy service to meet demand. This is being complemented by a national literacy initiative in primary schools.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Early education

Defining standards, learning objectives and the curriculum

There is as yet no nationally organized pre-school provision in Ireland. The recently published white paper on early childhood education, *Ready to Learn* (1999), referred to above, begins the process of establishing a national framework of early childhood education. The white paper sets out a quality framework for the development of early childhood education. A 'quality in education' (QE) mark will be developed, and awarded to providers of early education who meet defined standards concerning training, learning objectives and the curriculum. While the key focus will be on supporting existing private providers to enhance the quality of their services, the State will be involved, where necessary, in direct provision for priority target groups, including the disadvantaged and children with special needs.

An independent agency, the Early Childhood Education Agency (ECEA), will be established to undertake a range of policy and executive tasks related to standard-setting, evaluation and inspection, curriculum development, qualifications, research and development.

Primary and secondary education

Child-centred approach

Primary schools in Ireland concern themselves with children aged from 4 to 12. A new primary school curriculum (1999) adopts an explicit commitment to lifelong learning. Reflecting this commitment, the priority focus of primary education is on basic education through a child-centred approach and philosophy.

Providing complete second-level education to all students

The Irish second-level school system caters for those aged from 12 to 18. The primary objective of the second-level system is to provide complete second-level education to all students. In recent years, a range of curricular reforms have been undertaken in junior and senior cycle in second level, so that the programmes offered would provide a better fit for the aptitudes and interests of the expanded pupil clientele.

Preventing school underachievement for children at risk

In recent years also, special services for children at risk of school underachievement have been significantly developed and include:

- an extensive remedial education system;
- an expanded psychological support service to schools;
- an expanded provision of teachers' assistants and resource teachers for children with special learning needs;
- the designation of more than 310 schools as disadvantaged, with preferential teacher/pupil ratios in these schools;
- a new pilot initiative to promote retention in the education system to completion of second-level.

Additional teaching, financial support, cooperation between sectors, restructuring of the curriculum to widen subject choice, strengthening of language teaching, integration of ICTs and development of personal skills

Staff development, additional teaching and financial support for schools in designated areas of disadvantage, promotion of home/school/community links, development of inter-agency community partnerships between the formal and non-formal sectors, and the enhancement of remedial, guidance and psychological services form part of the approach to encourage optimum participation in schooling of those at risk, so that the maximum number possible complete upper secondary education or its equivalent. A comprehensive review of curricula has taken place, and new programmes (Junior Cycle Schools Programme, Transition Year Option, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied) have been introduced in order to enhance relevance and widen choice. These reforms involve a strengthening of language, vocational and technical options, and the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into teaching and learning, allied with an emphasis on promoting personal development, interpersonal skills, teamwork, initiative, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and the capacity for self-directed learning. A schools/industry links programme is also provided in collaboration with national employer interests.

Raising the compulsory school-leaving age

An educational welfare bill, when enacted, will raise the compulsory school-leaving age from 15 to 16 or completion of lower secondary education, whichever is the later. It will also establish an educational welfare service to monitor student attendance and intervene to support children at risk. The service will ensure appropriate placements for those in need, and will also assist in ensuring that those over 16 and under 18 who leave school early to enter employment will be supported to continue their education and training.

Further and second chance education

Vocational and community and comprehensive schools provide a wide range of adult learning opportunities, as do a growing minority of the voluntary secondary schools. While most of this provision has been primarily recreational, and is not publicly funded, there are a growing number of job-related courses in areas such as ICTs, business studies and languages. About 130,000 participate in these self-funded evening programmes annually.

Out-of-school integrated programme for early school-leavers

For those who have left school early, **Youthreach** provides an out-of-school integrated education, training and work experience programme to prepare young people for work or progression to further education and training. Some 7000 places nationally are provided on the programme, assisted by a guidance, counselling and psychological service and childcare

Second chance for the unemployed

The **Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)** was established to provide second chance education for unemployed people aged over 21. It provides a full-time education opportunity to participants who are at least six months unemployed. The programme is provided by the vocational education committees (VECs) and offers a range of vocational options, from National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) foundation level for those with no qualifications, to NCVA Level 2 (post-leaving certificate). Participants may also pursue subjects in the junior or leaving certificate, or acquire a portfolio of qualifications in line with their needs and interests. They may follow programmes in discrete VTOS class groups or as individuals dispersed on a range of other programmes. A training allowance is paid in lieu of social welfare entitlements, and travel and meal allowances are also paid.

Since its inception in 1989, the programme has been aided by the European Social Fund (ESF), and has expanded from a pilot programme in three centres to a national programme offering 5000 places a year.

An extensive range of vocational preparation and training courses called **post-leaving certificate (PLC) courses** is provided in over 200 centres each year catering for some 24,500 students in a wide range of disciplines, such as business, computing, electronics, sport, leisure and tourism, catering, childcare, community care, teleservices, art, craft, theatre, stage and performance art. Tuition is free, and means-tested maintenance grants were introduced in September 1998. While the programme was originally established to bridge the gap between school and work for those who had completed upper secondary education, it is increasingly being taken as an option now by older adults – some 25% of participants are over 21.

Wide choice

Adult literacy service

An **adult literacy** service is provided by VECs. Investment in this critical area is increasing rapidly from what was a very low base in 1997. Participants are matched initially with a one-to-one volunteer tutor, and move on from there to tuition in small groups with the opportunity to progress to certified learning options. Some 10,000 participants annually make use of the service.

This is being supplemented by an increased focus on the integration of literacy and numeracy skills into education and training programmes for those with inadequate skills who are seeking to re-enter the labour market. Literacy programmes over the radio have been piloted, and the Department of Education has now commissioned the development of a TV awareness and tuition programme.

Time flexibility

In the further education area, a major **'back to education' initiative** is being developed which will build on existing programmes, but involve a significant expansion of part-time options across PLC, Youthreach and VTOS programmes, in order to attract those who are not motivated to undergo full-time training, and to encourage the combination of family responsibilities and/or work with ongoing education and training. This is seen as critical if the 'pull' from education and training into work in a buoyant labour market is to be addressed to enable those without skills to acquire qualifications, and also to increase the flexibility of the system to respond to the needs of those in employment.

Tertiary education

Increasing provision, relevance and participation of under-represented groups, supporting industry and developing flexibility

The key priorities at third level are to increase provision and relevance in line with emerging skill needs, to increase participation levels of the under-represented groups in third-level education, to enhance the research and development capacity of colleges to support industry, and to develop flexible access and progression arrangements.

A key element of policy in relation to third level is to enhance the participation of disadvantaged groups. A major investment programme is being put in place which will focus on:

- college-based outreach and support programmes, and mature student second chance programmes;

- support for students with disabilities (including equipment, materials, care or interpretative support, guidance, etc);
- additional financial aid targeted at the poorest students;
- development of strategic links and specific support programmes with second-level schools in disadvantaged areas to encourage and motivate pupils to aspire to third-level education;
- provision of access officers in third-level colleges;
- development of flexible entry, provision and accreditation arrangements.

Pilot projects

Irish education has been characterized by numerous pilot projects in areas such as increasing participation rates, remedial education, curricular innovations, ICTs in education, access and accreditation. Up to recent years, such projects were more implicitly a part of a lifelong learning approach but, with the more clear articulation of a government lifelong learning policy, they are now regarded as part of an integral framework to promote lifelong learning.

Two main types of publicly established initiative may be identified: those established as EU-funded Community Initiatives and those established specifically by the Irish Government, often with EU support.

Of the former (the EU Community Initiatives), the most important have been the Employment Youthstart, Now, Horizon and Integra programmes, and the global grants for local development – all 1994-99, allied with national programmes under successive EU-aided human resources development programmes over the period since 1990.

As regards government-driven pilot initiatives, the government has recently published *The New Deal* (1999). This involves a range of initiatives from pre-school to adult learning aimed at addressing issues of educational disadvantage. It is arguably the first lifelong learning educational package and includes the following:

- policy, research and support for the development of a quality framework for early childhood education, allied with targeted provision for specific disadvantaged groups;
- additional support to primary and second-level schools in disadvantaged areas, within the context of a school development plan which has specific targets and objectives aimed at improving participation and benefit for those at risk. Extra teaching resources, funding, provision for parent programmes and out-of-school programmes, administrative assistance and community outreach form part of the approach. This will build on work to date under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, and pilot programmes such as the *Early School Leaver Initiative* established in 1988/89 for 8-15-year-olds in 14 locations;

- the *Stay in School Initiative* comprising school-led student retention plans focusing on special support to those at risk of dropout. Established in 1991, the project initially involved 23 schools and aims eventually to mobilize over 50;
- a national literacy initiative (aimed at primary schools and the ongoing development and expansion of the adult literacy service);
- enhancement of the guidance service in schools, and the development of an adult educational guidance service;
- expansion of the recently established National Educational Psychological Service Agency;
- support for the establishment of an education and welfare service to monitor school attendance and support those at risk to remain in school;
- provision for the establishment of the 'back to education' initiative referred to above;
- measures for the appointment of access officers and for other outreach activities by higher education institutions, allied with funding for initiatives to improve participation in third-level education;
- establishment of the National Qualifications Authority.

In addition, a women's education initiative established to assist projects which addressed gaps in provision for educationally disadvantaged women will be further developed and strengthened. Under the initiative, 13 projects are being supported aiming to build local capacity, develop support structures, accredit women's learning and encourage partnership between voluntary and statutory agencies.

The initiative is aided as an equality measure by the ESF as part of the *Operational Programme for Human Resources Development* (1994/99). This measure is now being expanded and widened to include innovative and strategic development for other marginalized groups.

ITALY

The significance of the concept at national level

Concept employed officially since 1996

The term *Educazione lungo tutto il corso della vita* (lifelong learning) was first used during 1996, the European Year of Lifelong Learning. From the end of the 1970s, it had previously been more common to use the concept *educazione permanente,* in regional legislation in particular. A policy for lifelong learning, comprising institutional actions based on formal provisions and requirements, was introduced in Italy from 1996 onwards. It represented a departure from the previous period in seeking to end a policy characterized by sectoral initiatives focused on particular sub-systems or areas of intervention.

Formal and non-formal education at any age

Two important principles characterize the concept of lifelong learning as referred to in official documents:
- determination that the right to formal or non-formal education should be extended to all age-groups, including the elderly;
- recognition of the educational role of education and training agencies, irrespective of the system to which they belong.

Aims and strategies

Broadening provision and access; encouraging integration and mobility

The major strategies corresponding to the wide range of provisions introduced in recent years may be described in terms of the following goals:
- the creation of 'extended' education and training provision geared to the need for such provision at all stages of life and for all sectors of the population;
- broadening the potential applications of education and training to promote labour market and social integration and mobility.

Developing decentralization and autonomy

Reform policies were introduced to implement these strategies and redefine the relationship between training, the economy and society. Up to now, their purpose has been to achieve the following general objectives as regards the education system in particular:
- restoring balance to the complex relationship between the unified historical tradition that underlay the policies and management of public education, and the more recent but no less vital need to respond to the demand for decentralization and autonomy. This demand is apparent in increasingly rapid innovation within the school system, as well as, more generally, in the country and its constitutional structure (regions, local authorities, etc.);
- coordinating and integrating the various systems and sub-systems involved in the process of reform. This has affected areas that were previously distinct, if not actually competing with one another. Reform led to the introduction of the 'educational dimension' into policies and systems not directly designed for

Coordinating the various systems and sub-systems

educational purposes, via a wide range of initiatives enabling them to intercommunicate (through the integration of centres providing organization, planning, services and other activities). Policies more directly concerned with integration in the field of education cover the areas of work, culture, society and vocational training;

Introduction of individual supporting measures

- increasing opportunities for access to lifelong learning among citizens of all ages by introducing demand-driven policies and measures to abolish possible barriers to access, such as economic status and restrictions on time. Measures of this kind might include *buoni studio* (entitlements), study grants, *assegni di studio* (academic subsidies), *prestiti d'onore* (guaranteed loans) and *permessi di studio* (study leave).

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Overall consistency as a result of adapting existing facilities and involving all relevant interests

The development of lifelong education has depended on policies geared to overall consistency in the work of all the parties and initiatives involved. These policies have affected interested parties in two main ways: they have adapted existing facilities to the new tasks, and sought to integrate all relevant interests and administrative aspects of training provision (planning, organization, design and management).

The process has focused on three main areas: the education system, associated systems, and the right to lifelong learning. Here, we shall concentrate primarily on the first of these areas, bearing in mind the terms of reference of the present survey.

The school system as a means of promoting economic development, thanks to good education and training of human resources

The *Patto sociale per lo sviluppo e l'occupazione* (Social Pact for Development and Employment) signed by the government and social partners in 1998, along with further legislation, has established a joint and unanimously agreed fresh definition of what the school system is expected to achieve. The priority aim is to transform it into an 'instrument to promote economic development by providing for the satisfactory education and training of human resources'. In Italy, this implies a profound transformation of the system through policies that are responsive to the new demand for education and training, as well as through greater flexibility in management, and more diversified better quality provision.

Modernization of management methods in the school system has aimed at increasing the flexibility of both administration and teaching by granting schools autonomy, and making the resultant system more effective through the introduction of measures for quality control.

School autonomy is instrumental in the development of lifelong learning, as it allows the various players in the school system to allocate their own resources to activities designed for adults and to introduce adequate methodologies, tools, organizational methods and periods of time for these initiatives in schools. As a

School autonomy

result of their autonomy, the latter have an opportunity to create 'integrated bodies' (such as consortia, single-purpose associations and temporary joint venture projects) with firms and other bodies (including vocational training and adult education centres, cultural institutions and universities).

Certification measures have focused on three objectives in particular: improvement of the infrastructure, development of teaching technologies – with particular attention to distance learning – and staff training.

Quality control measures

The other important trend, which at present relates primarily to schools, concerns the introduction, alongside internal evaluation mechanisms, of methods used by other systems to certify and accredit the quality of education and training. In the first instance, this occurred in certain parts of the school system because legislation affecting general policies for education and culture tended to introduce forms of accreditation that were based on standards defined at national level and adapted to suit regional circumstances. This policy is relevant to the development of lifelong learning, as it leads to the introduction of methods for preselecting agencies on the basis of formal standards consistent with lifelong learning criteria.

Broadening and diversifying provision

Policies to broaden and diversify education and training provision constitute an essential new component in the development of lifelong learning. They have led to profound innovations in the education system, and an increase in the average number of hours of education guaranteed each citizen by the Italian school system. The following three policies were designed to achieve these results: education was begun at an earlier age; the period of compulsory schooling was extended; and new integrated education and training paths were developed.

The pre-school system

To implement Law No. 285 of 28 August 1997, *Disposizioni per la promozione di diritti e di opportunità per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza* (provisions for the promotion of the rights and opportunities of infants and adolescents), measures designed to improve and extend provision for children and young people which is not strictly school-based, have focused on infants who have not yet reached the age of compulsory schooling and adolescents. In addition to traditional day nurseries and nursery schools (*asili nido and scuole materne*), new types of services with the following characteristics have been provided for the pre-school age group:

- part-time care: every day, in the morning or afternoon only;
- periodic care: only a few days a week;
- integrated part-time care: activities with parents and volunteers;
- educational continuity from birth to the age of six: links with nursery schools;
- activities involving parents on day nursery premises when nursery sessions have come to an end;

New more varied patterns of provision

- flexible timetable packages for families, which can request module-based timetables more closely matched to their own organizational requirements.

Local coordination

In addition, some regions set up *Centri per l'infanzia, l'adolescenza e la famiglia* (CIAF, or Centres for Infants, Adolescents and the Family). In such cases, the regions encouraged municipalities to establish the centres so that resources could be incorporated and educational measures coordinated in a single structure. Their function is to establish an educational plan for children from their birth to the legal age of majority, with the participation of the family and school. Activity at the centres is dominated by three main concerns:

- children aged 3 or under, and their families: this particular facility is geared to the new requirements of families and the need to supervise the very youngest children. It is intended for families which have chosen a more flexible educational model requiring greater parental participation than the one provided by traditional day nurseries;
- educational continuity: this concern is reflected in projects to ease the transition from infancy into school for those aged between 3 and 6; and in a range of different projects in support of education, group activities, socialization and training for the 7-14 and 15-18 age-groups;
- culture for children, adolescents, young people and social life: this aspect focuses on socialization, group activities and relationships between adults and children; it is also aimed at transmitting knowledge, and making families more aware of the problems they may encounter and the role of parents of adolescents or children on the brink of adolescence.

Compulsory education and training

The obligation to take part in education or training activities up to the age of 18

While education is compulsory up to the age of 15, the right/obligation to participate in education or training activities (delivered outside the formal education system) has been extended to include pupils in the age-group between 15 and 18. This is a major innovation because it increases the number of pupils receiving education or training and provides for two distinct kinds of approach: on the one hand, conventional education based on a course and, on the other, 'training' activities with a greater emphasis on guidance and designed to provide transversal skills and further study of cultural, social and scientific issues.

Post-compulsory and tertiary education

New training paths have been created at the following levels in particular:

Creation of a new apprenticeship system

Since September 1998, the Government has initiated an experimental national plan to provide general external training in the workplace, as proposed in the reform introduced with the *pacchetto Treu* (Treu package). This system, which involves schools themselves alongside other types of agencies and associations in managing the training provided, has to carry out the following key tasks: identification and mobilization of resources; definition and control of standards; planning for training at local and regional levels; assistance and motivation for company heads; information, motivation and guidance for potential apprentices; information management; development of specialized networks to manage activities; assessment and certification; accreditation and the training of trainers.

Creation of a new form of learning combining in-company and general training

The apprenticeship-based training is conceived as a continuous course made up of the following essential components:

- on-the-job training, in which students work in production activity with company heads or other employees;
- on-the-job training accompanied by regular personalized instruction with company tutors, supplementing the task of production itself;
- external general training, the aims and characteristics of which are defined in the legislation in force.

External general training has to be open (with a curriculum linked to the whole range of parallel and subsequent training programmes), flexible (adaptable to the timetables and rates of learning of pupils and the organizations they work in) and personalized (taking into account the specific nature of the training needs of apprentices and the firms in which they work).

To this end, the training provided has three basic characteristics:

- it is presented in the form of teaching modules and units to allow apprentices and firms an exceptionally wide choice of content, timetable patterns and, in some cases, the location in which training activity will be carried out. Training course packages are thus built up in a personalized way through the deliberate selection of modules;
- individual student apprentices – and thus the firms in which they work – receive a fixed number of study entitlements for use within local networks for the general training of apprentices or within other agencies;
- there are a great many agencies specializing in the various fields of training provision for apprentices, which offer coordinated modules covering different areas of content, different times of the year and, where possible, different regional sub-sectors.

Apprentices have to choose at least three modules which may be administered by different agencies. They may be provided at different times of the year and have to have been freely selected by apprentices from the very extensive range of options available. The methodologies used have to be focused on the participants.

The modules, which must be interrelated, complementary and designed to explain work processes, have to correspond a variety of training objectives including, in particular, the following:

- **systematizing professional experience and ensuring that it has sound scientific and technical foundations**. Professional experience will be built up at the workplace and refer to knowledge imparted at the same time. In this respect, some training activity will have to be set aside to cover issues concerning discipline at the workplace, the organization of work, collective preventive measures and operational models to safeguard health and safety in the workplace;
- **support for personal and transferable transversal skills** possessed by apprentices. At this level, training should make special reference to horizontal content through which knowledge of languages or mathematics may be revitalized, and which focuses also on relationship behaviour, organizational and management expertise, economic knowledge (involving systems, sectors and firms) and any communications or social skills;
- **development of professional skills** to master innovations apparent in the production sector, or in the profession chosen by the trainee apprentice. Content of a practical, scientific or technical nature intended to upgrade the skill of apprentices will have to be adapted in accordance with different professions. This is also the level at which matters related to safety at the workplace and individual means of protection for workers in the profession concerned are examined in greater depth.

Creation of a new training path in *Istruzione Formazione Superiore Integrata – IFTS* (Integrated Higher Vocational Education and Training)

The new flexibly organized IFTS system incorporates different levels of school, post-secondary and university education, vocational training and the world of work. It enables:

Creation of a new education and training pathway combining school, post-secondary and university education, vocational training and the world of work

- young graduates to acquire advanced skills corresponding to the needs of the workplace, so that they can enter the labour market more quickly and easily, and also more readily continue their studies in education and training provision that follows on naturally from courses they have already completed;
- adults at work to upgrade and secure recognition of their skills and professional experience, in such a way as to encourage the right to education and training at all stages of life, as well as mobility and professional enrichment;
- adults without work or officially unemployed to find new opportunities for employment and/or self-employment;

IFTS is administered by an integrated institution (consortium or other type of association) made up of at least four members: a higher public-sector school institution, a vocational training institution or centre, a university, or one or more firms or associations of firms.

IFTS courses have the following general characteristics:
- formal establishment of a technical and scientific project committee which has to include representatives of the partners and company heads responsible for preparing the project in advance, oversee its development along the way and issue any intermediate certification;
- introduction of a system of training credits that can be obtained during and at the end of the IFTS course on the basis of national guidelines and regional adaptations to them.

The courses themselves are characterized by the following principal elements:
- they last two to four semesters and, in all cases, involve no less than 1200 hours at an average cost of 400,000,000 lire (EUR 206,583);
- placements have to account for no less than 30% of the total number of hours and be undertaken in firms, at the same time as practical training;
- at least 50% of the teaching staff have to come from the world of production, the professions and other occupations;
- teaching activities are carried out in different locations, depending on their particular aim and the facilities available;
- accompanying measures introduced to support course participants are drawn up in accordance with the frequency with which credits are obtained, and the achievement of final certification (personalized follow-up, skills assessment, tutoring, etc.).

Adult education

The new integrated adult education system was established to achieve the following aims:
- review and broaden the education and training offered to young people and adults of all ages, whether employed or unemployed;
- encourage access to all forms of adult education and initial vocational training, as well as to non-formal provision in the fields of culture, health education, social services, training in civic responsibilities and physical education for adults.

Reviewing and broadening access and the provision of formal and non-formal education and training

The integrated adult education system is aimed at establishing a range of measures for study and planning and to support the demand for education and training. These initiatives call for a combined effort by the competent systems and agencies acting within the sector to achieve the above-mentioned aims.

A Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers adopted jointly by the Ministers of Education, of Labour and Social Security, of Social Policies, and of the Universities and Scientific and Technological Research, with the approval of the Joint conference of the Central Government and the Regions (legislative Decree no. 281 of 28 August 1997) defines the conditions for access to education and training provision leading to final certification, the formal requirements relating to patterns of provision which may be accredited by the systems concerned, the credits acquired in them and the ways in which they can be certified and used (in accordance with Art. 142, paragraph I, letter c) of Legislative Decree no. 112 of 31 March 1998).

Implementation at local level

The regions are responsible for planning the system. Formulation of the criteria for promoting, monitoring and assessing it is entrusted to a committee operating at regional level. All institutional interests involved, including area-based school offices, local bodies and the social partners are represented within the committee set up by the region.

In collaboration with area-based school offices, other institutional agencies, the social partners and associations, local bodies supervise the setting up of local committees for the planning and provision of different forms of integrated adult education and training at this level. The areas for which committees are competent are determined by the regions in accordance with criteria established in the course of regional planning.

Activities are devised and run by permanent area-based centres and the schools for which they are responsible, vocational training centres, employment services, networks of civic initiatives for adult education, public cultural amenities (public libraries, museums, theatres, cinemas, cultural and non-cultural undertakings, public and private training agencies, etc.), associations and universities. The management of initiatives with a bearing on the duration and extension of the project is undertaken by mixed membership bodies set up by at least two of the foregoing agencies.

Horizontal measures at the different levels of education

Support for the transition from school to work

Easing the transition from school to working life

New initiatives have been adopted to promote the transition from school to work. Placements in firms and practical work have been introduced at all levels of education, except basic level. More specifically, the following types of initiative have been established in the school system:

- short and long placements providing guidance and training from the start of secondary school;
- courses for the acquisition of professional skills at the end of upper secondary school.

Services

An exceptional effort has been made to develop and strengthen the support services entrusted specifically to highly specialized staff (project leaders, coordinators, tutors, information officers, guidance specialists, counsellors, assessors,

Establishment of various support services: information, guidance, skills assessment, etc.

etc.). These services promote access to training and mobility between systems and the workplace. The services provided are attached to the following sectors: information, motivation, guidance, certification, skills assessment, counselling in training and professional matters, active monitoring to prevent dropout, the training of trainers and placements.

Actions have been organized in conjunction with the employment services to ensure that participants find employment or continue their training programme.

Credits

Pilot projects for mutual recognition of credits (equivalences)

A system of credits has been introduced to allow participants to move freely within the education and training system. This innovation is currently being perfected and applied within two systems (university and IFTS), and agreements are in hand to ensure the reciprocal recognition of credits in both. Experiments are also currently in progress at upper secondary school level, focusing in particular on the transition to the vocational training system.

However, it is in adult education that the most advanced experiments have been introduced. Here the education and training model takes the form of a wide range of open and flexible courses that are distinctive as regards their modular nature. Regardless of the sector that provides them (association, school, etc.), each module can be recognized by schools or vocational training institutions as a training credit for the purpose of further studies (in the school or vocational system). Recognition may be granted to skills acquired outside specialized agencies in education and vocational training and, in particular, agencies offering forms of provision included in plans drawn up at regional and local level.

The right to lifelong education

Initiatives already carried out or in progress at this level focus on two aspects:

New legislative provisions

- General acceptance of the individual right to education.
  Action under this heading follows the introduction into Italian law (at national and regional levels) of measures which might possibly be extended to all. For age-groups subject to compulsory schooling or training, this law consists in the obligation on the persons concerned to take courses within normal school provision, or some kind of training. For adults (aged over 18), these measures relate to the following:
  - extension to all groups of workers of the right to paid study leave lasting 150 hours a year (with various restrictions related to the number of workers in each firm and the type of training activity, etc.);
  - experimental introduction of a sabbatical year;
  - introduction of entitlements and study benefits;
  - introduction of guaranteed loans;
  - provision of measures such as 'individual training accounts'.

- Targeted policies for acknowledgement of the individual right to education. The most important measures have focused on this aspect and led, in particular, to adoption of the following:
  - training/work contracts for individuals entering the labour market (including the entitlement of apprentices to 120 hours of external general education and training);
  - types of reduced work schedule enabling those interested to use the hours of leave made available for education and training purposes;
  - right to training for itinerant workers, etc.

LUXEMBOURG

The significance of the concept at national level

In Luxembourg, lifelong education has not been officially defined although the term is often used in discussions about continuing (vocational) training. In fact, the two expressions currently used are *formation (professionnelle) continue* (continuing vocational training) and *formation des adultes* (adult education and training).

No official definition, but reference to the concepts of 'continuing vocational training' and 'adult education and training'

Continuing vocational training has been defined by two items of legislation:
- the Law of 4 September 1990 for the reform of technical secondary education and continuing vocational training;
- the Law of 22 June 1999 for the support and development of continuing vocational training.

The Law of 19 July 1991 led to the creation of a Service for Adult Education and attributed a status to the Luxembourg Languages Centre.

Aims and strategies

The aims of continuing vocational training and adult education and training have been specified in the foregoing legislative texts.

The Law of 4 September 1990 stated that its aims are as follows:
- offer those persons engaged in a professional activity, whether salaried or self-employed, as well as the unemployed, the opportunity to study for the diplomas and certificates awarded in technical secondary education and to obtain a vocational qualification in a system for rapid training;
- help people holding a vocational qualification to adapt it to trends in technological progress and to economic requirements, or to supplement or broaden it;
- reinforce and supplement, on the basis of proposals from the professional chambers concerned, the practical forms of learning provided in firms.

Obtaining, adapting or supplementing a vocational qualification

Continuing vocational training may be provided by the Ministry of Education, professional chambers, the municipalities and private associations with formal individual approval from the Ministry for this purpose.

The very recent Law of 22 June 1999 aims to support and develop continuing vocational training.

This includes all training activities, excluding school education or training.

Fresh qualifications, retraining and promotion

Its aims are as follows:
- adapting the qualifications of workers and company managers by ensuring that their skills in the techniques and technologies of organization, production and marketing are at the required level;
- the retraining of workers and company managers with a view to them entering another professional occupation;
- the promotion of workers by preparing them for more demanding duties or posts, or for greater responsibility, and making the most of skills and potential used only slightly or not at all.

Training provided for in the above-mentioned Law relates only to the private sector of the economy (it concerns neither the government nor the municipalities).

Setting up a service for adult education and training

The July 1991 Law for the setting up of an adult education service has entrusted this service with the following responsibilities:
- coordination of the education and training offered adults in evening classes, through secondary education, technical secondary education, the Higher Technological Institute and the University Centre, as well as the training provided by the Languages Centre;
- establishing arrangements for adults through evening classes that provide a gateway to the diplomas and certificates awarded in normal daytime education;
- offering basic instruction to adult residents in Luxembourg;
- organizing courses of general interest in areas corresponding to *formation générale* and *promotion sociale* (mainly comprising general adult education);
- establishing and administering contracts for adult courses provided by municipalities or non-profit-making associations.

Aiming at better professional integration

The general aims of 'lifelong education' in Luxembourg are thus characterized primarily by a strengthening of basic learning in the case of adults, and encouragement of training for adults as such, with a view to improving their integration into the job market and professional life in general.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

In reality, the pre-compulsory and primary levels are hardly related to this strategy at all. The central emphasis of continuing vocational training and adult education and training is the development of the vocational and/or school qualifications obtainable by adults.

NETHERLANDS

The significance of the concept at national level

All forms of formal and informal learning

The Netherlands has adopted the definition provided by the Commission in its document *Setting targets for lifelong learning in Europe*: 'Lifelong learning encompasses all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence.'

Aims and strategies

In January 1998, the (then) government decided to launch a national action programme for lifelong learning known as *Nationaal Actieprogramma: een leven lang leren* ('Lifelong learning: the Dutch Initiative'). As the period in office of that government expired a short while later, decisions relating to implementation of the programme and the financing of its budget were left to the government that succeeded it.

Prevention of school dropout, improving the quality and the number of teachers, strengthening training infrastructures and the relation between education and firms

The August 1999 governmental declaration devotes special attention to lifelong learning. It proposes tax benefits for the training of workers, the introduction of linked-work-and-training courses in higher education, the setting up of huge regional learning centres, easier transition between courses and the establishment of innovative technological centres to improve cooperation between education and firms. Furthermore, additional budgetary resources are made available to prevent school dropout, improve the quality of teaching and the number of teachers, and strengthen training infrastructures and the relation between education and firms. Nevertheless, the 'Lifelong learning: the Dutch Initiative' programme is not referred to as such in the governmental declaration and will therefore not be wholly implemented.

In addition, in December 1998, the government and the social partners reached agreement on a ten-point 'employability' agenda for 1999 and 2000, as part of a national effort to encourage lifelong learning.

A ten-point 'employability' agenda

This agenda includes the following elements:
- the introduction of core skills into the aims of the qualifications structure;
- the growth of combined learning and work provision;
- the implementation of a system of assessment and accreditation for previous learning;
- the introduction of an 'Investors in people' label for firms;
- providing 'employability' advisers in small and medium-sized firms;
- the use of sectorial training and development funds to improve inter-sectorial mobility among the workforce;

- the prevention of school dropout;
- encouraging training for unemployed people with few qualifications;
- the development of an employability observatory;
- improving the employability of the unemployed and of workers without an initial qualification (apprenticeship level).

Developing social integration and civic involvement

Developing civic involvement or, in other words, improving the capacity of individuals to take part fully in the life of society is the social aspect of plans for lifelong learning. The aim is the achievement of total active citizenship for all, via professional activity for everyone able to work, an adequate level of education, and ability (particularly on the part of the elderly) to use new technologies and to confront all rapid changes in society (learning foreign languages, communication skills, showing initiative, etc.). Some social groups in the Netherlands have difficulty in coming to terms with these demands of modern society. In most cases, the people concerned do not belong to the active workforce. While policy for lifelong learning in the Netherlands is centred strongly on improving the employability of the workforce, mechanisms and strategies are being devised to involve vulnerable groups in lifelong learning and enable them to become integrated into society.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Implementation of the new information and communication technologies at all levels of education

A special steering committee has been established up to July 2002, to introduce and implement the new information and communication technologies at all levels of the education system, from primary to higher education.

Secondary education

Different legislative programmes in secondary education

In secondary education, different legislative programmes are now undergoing implementation:

- for vocational upper secondary education: the 1996 *Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs* (Adult and Vocational Education Act), the setting up of regional training centres to facilitate transition between different kinds of courses, the introduction of a qualifications structure to improve links between education and firms, and access to made-to-measure course offerings;
- to prepare students for vocational upper secondary education: introduction of a new (1998) law, the merging of general and vocational lower secondary education, the development of four learning programmes, the broadening of the core skills programme and improvements in the transition to various levels of higher education;
- for general upper secondary education: introduction of a new (1998) law, the introduction of the 'study house' concept intended to encourage cooperative and autonomous forms of learning.

Higher education

In higher education, linked-work-and-training programmes are now being developed to stimulate learning and work in combination.

Linked-work-and-training programmes

Pilot projects[1]

Core skills in vocational training

The introduction of core skills into the qualifications structure of vocational training. Period: 1998 – September 2000

School dropout

A national plan to combat school dropout was approved by parliament in September 1999. The action plan is being implemented at local level. Period: 2000-2004

The introduction of courses combining learning with work

A tripartite working group has been examining ways of promoting the development of a greater number of combined learning-and-work course offerings. Its findings will culminate in strategic recommendations aimed at strengthening this kind of provision. Period: 1998 – December 1999

Qualifications for early school-leavers

The government and social partners are to prepare proposals for ISCED level 2 qualifications for those who have left the school system too soon to start professional activity. These proposals are expected to lead to a pilot scheme in the second half of 2000.

Attract more teachers into primary education

To overcome the teacher shortage in basic education, a group of teachers has been brought together within the ministry. It will act to try and enhance the attractiveness of the profession, broaden the involvement of teachers in training programmes and encourage the transfer of staff from firms into teaching. Period: 1999-2003

New information and communication technologies in primary education

An *ad hoc* steering committee has been established within the ministry. The government has outlined the broad aims of incorporating the new information and communication technologies into schools, made available structural funds for their benefit, and provided them with the necessary information. Depending on their particular situation, schools are thus able to draw up plans and decide how much they wish to spend on the purchase of equipment (computers and software), maintenance, teacher training and the internal management involved in introducing these new technologies. Period: 1999-2002

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[1] Only pilot projects undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science are referred to here.

AUSTRIA

The significance of the concept at national level

Education and training policy issues occupy a major position in various governmental agreements. Education is considered an important area for economic, democratic and cultural development.

The concept is used in the sense of 'continuing education'

The Austrian education system is characterized by a well-developed and highly differentiated education system at secondary level, at which over two-thirds of young people already obtain professional qualifications. However, participation rates in further education and training among the active labour force differ widely. The concept of lifelong learning is thus used in the sense of 'continuing education', referring to an expansion in education and training provision, improved access to programmes and increasing permeability of the system to improve the qualifications of the working-age population.

Special emphasis on the relation between education, continuing education and employment

The Austrian approach to lifelong learning focuses on *Sekundarstufe II* (upper secondary level), the *tertiäre Bildungssektor* (tertiary education and training) and adult education, in line with the government working programmes, the Youth Training Consolidation Act, the school laws (*Schulorganisationsgesetz, Schulunterrichtsgesetz* and *Schulunterrichtsgesetz für Berufstätige*) and decrees, the *Berufsreifeprüfungsgesetz*, the university laws, the *Akademiestudiengesetz*, the *Fachhochschulstudiengesetz*, and the National Action Plan for Employment, as well as Austrian programmes under the European Social Fund. There is thus a special emphasis on the relation between education, continuing education and employment.

Aims and strategies

Improving provision of education and training, facilitating admission to higher education, providing financial support for special preparatory courses

The most important measures for extending provision in the area of education and training, and improving opportunities for involvement may be classified as follows:

- a wider offer for the active population in general (see also below);
- facilitating admission to higher education for:
  - those who have no *Reifeprüfungszeugnis* or *Reife- und Diplomprüfungszeugnis* (upper secondary school leaving certificates providing higher education entrance qualifications), by promoting alternative pathways or *den Zweiten Bildungsweg* ('second chances', adult education): *Berufsreifeprüfung, Externistenreifeprüfung, Studienberechtigungsprüfung; AHS und BHS für Berufstätige* (schools and colleges for people in employment);
  - people in employment seeking higher qualifications by offering *Fachhochschule* courses for this particular target group;

- an opportunity for specific 'credit transfers' upon entry into higher education: e.g. for graduates of technical and vocational (TVE) colleges applying for a corresponding *Fachhochschule* course, or graduates of a post-secondary course in technical and vocational education, or a post-secondary teacher training college, who are continuing their studies at university in one of the fields concerned;
- organization of special courses so that young people aged up to 18 who previously dropped out of the system can complete compulsory education free of charge; financial support for such courses targeted at adults (*Nachholen des Hauptschulabschlusses*);
- the provision of a 'safety net' for (disadvantaged) young people who do not find an apprenticeship (pre-apprenticeships with credit transfer, training schemes in independent training institutions, occupational courses at vocational schools for apprentices, etc.);
- increasing the number of places provided at full-time technical and vocational schools (upper secondary);
- adaptation of curricula and implementation of new TVE courses to meet the demands of technological/economic change;
- development of new occupational profiles for apprenticeship training;
- increasing further education opportunities for the unemployed.

Reforming the financing of education

Government coalition agreements also include a series of points concerning cost trends and the reform of the financing of education. Since the start of the 1990s, a considerable number of measures have been introduced along these lines.

A special emphasis on the interaction between educational policy and economic questions ...

The last two coalition agreements were characterized by an emphasis on measures to foster key qualifications providing for adaptation to the needs of a rapidly changing economy and its labour market consequences. Measures to promote employability, facilitate the transition from initial education to working life and upgrade people's qualifications have become crucial. A number of social and cultural questions have thus been considered in conjunction with economic issues, such as the return to work of women, the access of women to occupations that have been the traditional preserve of men, the integration of the handicapped and unemployed, and changes in expectations regarding professional activity and lifestyle.

... and on measures to prevent unemployment

In an economic context, measures relating to education and training policy are above all focused on lessening or preventing unemployment. The National Action Plan for Employment (NAP, the *Nationale Aktionsplan für Beschäftigung*) decreed by the Austrian government in April 1998, in accordance with EU directives, may be regarded as one of these measures. One of the national objectives is to reduce the number of 20-25-year-olds who have not acquired any qualifications beyond compulsory education, and to increase the percentage of people involved in continuing education and training activities. This is to be achieved by a number of measures, including the following:

- new forms of coordination and cooperation among different (further) education and training providers (also public and private institutions, pooling resources and expertise);
- the promotion of equality of opportunity;
- modularization of postgraduate and adult education and training programmes, thereby increasing permeability;
- targeted support programmes for workers to eliminate financial barriers;
- partial legal autonomy for schools and universities, enabling them to offer specific courses to meet the needs of the local/regional labour market;
- programmes to improve access to education for adults, extension of provision through information and communication technology (ICT) and open and distance learning (ODL) facilities to cater for disadvantaged groups and areas which are not well served;
- raising awareness of individual personal responsibility for further/continuing education;
- providing the necessary framework for training and sabbatical leave, etc.

Despite the importance of employability, a more holistic view of education was promoted during the Austrian EU Presidency, emphasizing the role of creativity and the arts in personal development and the acquisition of key skills, such as problem-solving, etc. In addition, new curricula are to provide the basis for lifelong learning, by enabling students to acquire the skills needed to assume responsibility for their personal learning process. Increasing guidance and counselling activities and various other initiatives have been implemented to prevent school failure, and thus discourage future misgivings about continuing education.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Primary and secondary education

Preparing people for lifelong learning is considered one of the most important tasks of education, and compulsory education has to lay the necessary foundations. Its principles are laid down in the educational objectives of the central curricula.

Learning to learn, furthering the individual development of each child, ...

The *Grundschule*, or primary school for elementary education, has broad educational responsibilities in this context. It is mainly concerned with the individual development of each child. Besides meeting the needs of every schoolboy and schoolgirl, it must also pave the way for continuing learning processes in secondary education.

The task of lower secondary education (at *Hauptschule*), is to provide basic general education, enabling pupils to approach professional life in accordance with their interests, abilities and skills, and to prepare them for schools and colleges at upper secondary level in the general or technical and vocational sectors of education.

Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule (AHS) offering education both at lower and upper secondary levels provides extensive general education and enables students to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for tertiary studies, thus laying the foundations for continuing education.

... providing a general basic education ...

helping to develop critical faculties, social and problem-solving skills ...

The same curricula apply in the case of both the *Hauptschule* and the lower level of AHS. The new curriculum (which comes into effect from autumn 2000) takes account of the fact that schools cannot equip pupils with all the knowledge and individual skills they will need in life. In addition to basic knowledge, schools have to provide pupils with dynamic procedural skills for lifelong learning processes. Some of the key issues are active and independent learning, self-evaluation, and assuming responsibility for and controlling learning processes. Personal and social abilities also play an important role and have to be encouraged. They include readiness to take responsibility, personal initiative, and the ability to work in groups or participate effectively in social life. Special emphasis is attached to the use of new technologies and relevant basic skills.

... encouraging independent judgement and ethical values

Young people have to be able to develop independent judgement and understanding of and responsibility for social relations, sensitivity to the political and philosophical views of others, and the ability to contribute to the economic and cultural life of the country, Europe and the world. Humanity, solidarity, tolerance, peace, justice and ecological awareness are values that stimulate action in our society and interact with economic-related issues. These values should become young people's guidelines.

The following guidelines concerning lifelong learning in the foreign language syllabus may serve as an example. These principles also apply to other subjects, although they are not always stated as extensively:

'Through their study of the foreign language, pupils should acquire basic skills that will also enable them to assimilate other foreign languages more easily at a later time.

Therefore learning techniques and strategies should be favoured that will help schoolchildren to:

- overcome their weaknesses and personal barriers concerning language acquisition;

- improve their own performance in foreign languages in the language skills (i.e. listening, reading, talking, writing), as well as in other important areas (e.g. vocabulary);
- reflect upon their own learning processes and control them.'

Particular emphasis is laid on foreign language learning in all types of school. The initiatives comprise early language learning, bilingual forms of education, and a wider offer of languages as early as lower secondary level, along with content and language-integrated learning (using the foreign language as working language in other subject areas). These measures are not only in line with EU requirements; they also aim to raise awareness among students of the importance of intercultural communication skills and improve their language learning techniques, so that they acquire the tools for further language learning later in life.

Selecting the right educational pathway

As the right choice of educational pathways is an important instrument not only for ensuring success at school and employability, but also in safeguarding a positive attitude towards lifelong learning, 'career information' (*Berufsorientierung*) has recently been introduced as a mandatory subject area or generic interdisciplinary principle into lower secondary curricula. Its purpose is to provide young people with information on the world of work, and personal guidance geared to matching their expectations, strengths and interests and preparing them for the transition to working life in cases where they opt for an apprenticeship.

At upper secondary level, the curricula for the *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule* comprise an optional subject focusing on employment and the world of work.

Improving information on careers and educational pathways ...

Guidance and counselling is offered at all secondary levels and in any type of school (whether TVE or general), and is expected to be of crucial importance at all levels (from primary school to adult education) in the future. Careers fairs are organized throughout the country to give out information on education and training opportunities, and stress the importance of continuing education.

As awareness-raising, guidance and counselling seem essential for girls and women to overcome gender-specific stereotyping and achieve equality of opportunity, the Action Plan 2000 has been developed.

At *Polytechnische Schule* – a one-year grade 9 course to complete compulsory schooling and provide vocational guidance mainly for those who intend to take up an apprenticeship – 'career information' is mandatory. The first weeks of the year are devoted to providing young people with information on occupational sectors, and helping them to discover their personal strengths and interests before they specialize in a particular area. Study visits and work placements are intended to foster effective decision-making.

providing more effective guidance and counselling

Measures to fight school failure and premature school dropout

Fighting failure and dropout ...

Various measures have been introduced in the firm belief that early school failure also influences participation rates in upper secondary education and any kind of further or higher education and training. One of the aims is to cut dropout rates at upper secondary level to less than 10% in the long term (as stipulated in the National Action Plan for Employment). Priority has been given to the following measures:

by improving diagnosis and support mechanisms ...

- improving facilities for diagnosis and consultation, along with the development of supplementary incentive measures in secondary schools, in order to improve the student success rate; teachers need to inform students and parents about a potential negative assessment as early as possible, and provide advice and support (*Frühwarnsystem*); a first evaluation has revealed a significant reduction in school failure in the TVE sector;

... establishing new forms of cooperation ...

- detailed study of the problems arising at the interface between lower and upper secondary education, in particular upon entry into TVE schools (upper secondary); increased provision of in-service training for teachers so that they apply learner-oriented methodologies and new ways of organizing the learning process; improved guidance and counselling; establishment of cooperation between lower secondary and TVE schools (upper secondary) to facilitate the transition process;

applying new methods and ...

- promoting the creation of new learning environments and methodologies which allow for the simulation of the world of work, and foster the development of key qualifications in particular in the TVE sector (e.g. work in school-based training firms, cooperation-based engineering projects, new organizational forms and longer work placements in the four-year vocational schools for engineering);

... introducing quality management into schools

- quality management in schools – a variety of initiatives have been introduced either at a common level, or tailored to the needs of different types of school. A quality network and support facilities on the web (QIS) have been set up. From 2002/2003 onwards, the 'quality in schools' system will be compulsory.

Improving the permeability of the system

Facilitating progression

The aim of increasing participation rates in upper secondary and higher education has made it necessary to improve the permeability of the system in the following ways:

- facilitating progression from *Polytechnische Schule* and the apprenticeship system into *Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen* and *Berufsbildende höhere Schulen* (BMS, BHS and full-time upper secondary TVE courses);
- ensuring access to *Fachhochschule* courses for people with relevant initial vocational qualifications (such as those leaving the apprenticeship training system);
- improving access to post-secondary/tertiary education for those leaving the apprenticeship training system, three- or four-year courses at TVE schools or

nursing and specialist paramedical courses, by implementing the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (see adult education).

Higher education

To broaden access to tertiary education, legal measures (*Berufsreifeprüfung* and *Studienberechtigungsprüfung*) have been introduced (see secondary education and adult education).

Responsibility for the provision of continuing education and training belongs to the universities as laid down in law. Courses at universities to cater for this kind of activity are steadily increasing. With its post-university focus, it is being offered by them entirely along their own lines, in accordance with the education and training needs of graduates and qualifications in demand on the labour market.

The *Universitätsstudiengesetz* (UniStG, law on university studies) and the *Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz*, which came into force in 1997, applied the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to courses, with the aim of increasing flexibility and facilitating national and international admission to education and training (see above).

Furthermore, this legislation makes it possible for recognized comparable qualifications, such as Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) and Master of Business Administration (MBA), to be awarded for the first time. The quality of university courses is underpinned by a minimum number of hours of teaching and the application of admissions criteria.

Both the foregoing UniStG and the *Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz* provide for the incorporation of distance education units calling for the application of new information and communication technologies, including the Internet.

All such measures should make access to tertiary education and training easier for all those groups in the population which have hitherto been unable to benefit from it (first evaluations show that around 10% of *Fachhochschule* students have arrived via one of the alternative routes).

Adult education

In line with the principle of lifelong learning, the goal of adult education and further vocational training is to enable learners to upgrade their qualifications, enhance their proficiency and competencies, and to further develop their individual talents along with their social skills. This may in turn promote their employability, as well as their capacity and readiness to attend to their own interests.

Adult education programmes in Austria are accessible to all. For some courses or training programmes, a specialist background is required, while others are limited to specific target groups (such as migrants, the unemployed, unskilled young people and women).

A wide range of opportunities ...

Adult education in Austria comprises general as well as technical and vocational education and training for upper secondary and tertiary qualifications, formal professional qualifications, professional development, and retraining and upgrading of skills (labour market measures), together with personal development. Many courses are intended to upgrade and enhance the skills of people who have already completed vocational education, especially in technology and engineering. A considerable number of initiatives focus on language learning.

in the public, semi-public and private sectors

Courses and programmes are offered by the formal education system as well as institutions of the social partners, churches, scientific and cultural associations, and professional private providers, which decide freely as to their organization, programmes and aims. They may receive financial support from public bodies provided they meet certain requirements.

Upgrading people's school certificates

One of the major responsibilities of adult education is to promote pathways to further and higher education, which enable learners to acquire educational certificates at a later stage ('second chance'). Austria has a long tradition in this respect.

Public and private schools/colleges for people in employment offer courses which are parallel to standard upper secondary courses and lead to the *Reifeprüfung* certificate allowing graduates to embark on post-secondary/tertiary-level studies. In the technical and vocational education sector, the *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* provides general higher education entrance qualifications, as well as professional qualifications. Bridge and add-on courses/modules within this framework are to meet the needs of people who have already completed some kind of initial training (apprenticeship, full-time vocational school). To promote these training opportunities, the *Schulunterrichtsgesetz für Berufstätige* was implemented and allows for the organizational flexibility required by adults (e.g. increasing modularization and ODL elements). The concept is to be enhanced by integrating the post-secondary courses into this scheme offering a single package with different entry and exit levels.

Although the *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (for admission to a particular field of study) and the *Externistenreifeprüfung* (both in general education and technical/vocational education) have provided supplementary routes for pursuing further studies, the recently introduced *Berufsreifeprüfung* constitutes yet another gateway to higher education (general higher education entrance qualifications but no vocational qualifications). All these exams can be taken after self-study or preparatory courses. Preparatory courses can be offered by schools as well as adult education institutions. In certain cases, the latter can also act as examination bodies provided they have been officially accredited.

Promoting ICT and ODL

One of the major aims in adult education is to promote open and flexible learning methods by integrating ICT, self-access and distance learning, tutor and guidance systems, and specifically developed learning materials with the long-term perspective to offer a comprehensive modular system.

Coordination

Depending on the objectives, target groups and responsibilities of the different ministries and/or social partners or other stakeholders, joint committees are established to provide overall consistency and synergy in the policy concerned and implementation of the necessary measures (such as the National Action Plan for Employment).

Pilot projects

- A University Centre for continuing education and training (Donau-Universität Krems) was created for the first time in Austria in 1994.
- University placements (see the foregoing section on the contribution of higher education).
- The *Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz* obliges those responsible for the individual courses also to offer vocational placements.
- In 1998 and 1999, the programme to encourage the use of 'multimedia education and training materials' was implemented in collaboration with the federal Ministry of Education and the Arts. To ensure that academic and creative potential, along with the scope for initiative, were as far as possible geared to the foregoing objective, the programme focused on the pedagogic and social aspects of multimedia, rather than their technological dimension. This initiative lasted two years and received a total of ATS 20 million (EUR 1.5 million) shared out among upper secondary education, the universities, *Akademien* (post-secondary/tertiary colleges), *Fachhochschul-Studiengängen*, institutes of the university of technology and adult education and training institutions. Project applications had to aim at devising interactive digital software for on-line and off-line teaching and learning applications. Applications were processed by a forum of experts convened by the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Minister of Science and Transport. Besides multimedia experts, the forum included representatives from bodies for education and training, together with users and consumers. The programme itself is ending with a final report in spring 2000.

- As it is intended to increase participation rates in TVE schools and colleges for people in employment (see above), a project has been initiated by the Ministry of Education to develop course materials for web-based open and distance education and training. This project is carried out in collaboration with Siemens and the *Büro für Internationale Forschungs- und Technologiekooperation* (BIT). It focuses on the development of teaching and learning materials for the entry phase of courses in business administration, as well as electronic data processing and organization. This project is being carried out under the EU Adapt Community Initiative (*FUBB – Fernunterricht in der beruflichen Bildung* from 1999 to 2000) A dozen colleges have already implemented the pilot phase of the project, whose continuation until 2004 is envisaged.

- Another project, known as *Portalserver für HTL Content*, which is now in its initial phase, aims at facilitating access to education opportunities in the field of engineering. Later in 2000, it is seeking to provide teaching and learning material, course programmes, lesson plans etc., for technical theory and practical use on one of the educational servers at colleges of engineering. Links to regional or international educational servers will be established.

- Lifelong learning is also a must for teachers. In view of the growing trend to integrate ICT in any subject area across the curriculum and the rapid development in this sector as such, teachers need to constantly upgrade their own skills and qualifications in this field. Thus the Ministry of Education has launched an initiative in cooperation with in-service teacher training colleges and two *Fachhochschule* course providers. The one-year course called *Multimedia und Telekommunikation* is organized in the form of national and regional seminars. It has been offered for three consecutive years and will be supplemented by a new course on learner/software development in 2000/2001.

PORTUGAL

The significance of the concept at national level

An educational process and an overall frame of reference for the development of the formal and informal education system

In Portugal, the concept of lifelong learning has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, it is an educational and formative process the length of which coincides with the lifespan of human beings from birth to death[1]. On the other, it also corresponds to a whole frame of reference for development of the education system, in a way that is linked to a strategic approach to changes in the economy and society of Portugal as it suddenly confronts the 21st century[2].

Working for employability, integration, social cohesion and revitalized citizenship

As an educational process, lifelong education embraces pre-compulsory education, basic, secondary and higher education, initial training in association with the labour market and adult education and training. This process also covers a whole body of non-systemic training activities which, while lacking any formal or institutionalized nature, contribute to the permanent updating of knowledge and skills, and the development of a critical enterprising spirit that is the hallmark of enhanced employability, stronger integration, social cohesion and a new revitalized concept of active citizenship.

A process of such extensive potential scope can only exist if it is adopted by the whole of society, and supported by forms of organization and activity which are based on the principles of reciprocal effort and the active participation of all involved.

As an overall long-term and strategic frame of reference, the concept of lifelong learning hinges on two essential ideas:

- boosting the transition towards a knowledge-based economy and information society;
- encouraging and strengthening the dynamic forces of change so that schools become privileged agencies for the establishment of knowledge, learning and models of behaviour, and capable of offering all citizens the basic essential resources for active citizenship within a society in the throes of rapid change.

If such developments are to be brought about, it is vital to overhaul the model of education as a service, so that it embodies a threefold transition along the following lines:

- from a system based on supply (conditioned by finite resources) towards one based on the premise of lifelong education for all, with a special role for learners whose education is expected to be thorough and multidimensional;

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[1] In Carta Magna – Lifelong Education and Training, National Commission for the Year of Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, Lisbon, 26 January 1998.

[2] In, A Strategic Approach for Confronting the 21st century, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Equipment, Planning and Administration of the Territory, MEPAT – Secretary of State for Regional Development, Lisbon, November 1998.

- from a closed system towards an open one conducive to many different kinds of educational provision, employability and the adaptation of training to real needs;
- from a system in which schools are relatively peripheral to one in which they are fully incorporated into living communities.

Aims and strategies

Guidelines and strategic documents on educational policy[3], as well as the Educational Development Programme for Portugal (2000-2006)[4] – PRODEP III, set out the following aims with a view to an integrated strategy for lifelong learning:

- encourage lifelong education and training for all and improve the employability[5] of the active population;
- improve the quality of basic education, in order to help create a culture of enterprise, responsibility and active citizenship;
- develop and diversify the initial training of young people, so that future generations have a high level of qualifications and employability;
- fight social and educational exclusion, and promote equality of opportunity as regards access and school performance;
- strengthen arrangements for school and vocational counselling, as well as for monitoring the different stages of education, training and transition from initial training to working life;
- strengthen the strategically pivotal interface between education and training, in the interests of sound lifelong training;
- develop and enhance the all-important role of school as the hub of educational and strategic policies, and of teachers as the custodians of training and counselling on access to information and on the acquisition of knowledge.

In this way, the strategy for lifelong learning in Portugal should be conducted in accordance with two broad complementary and increasingly overlapping areas of action, which are defined in accordance with specific target groups:

- the implementation of a new strategy[6] of **adult education and training as part of the right to basic education**. General lifelong access for all to progress in teaching, as well as in the fields of culture and technology, has to become an obligation on the part of society and an individual responsibility, in order that the demands of civic and professional life be met. The new strategy combines 'second chance' measures, the acquisition of core skills, vocational training and preparatory vocational training, civic and community activity and socio-cultural initiatives in an interdependent complementary relationship. It also provides a general framework for combining different stages of education and training, horizontal equivalencies, and arrangements for recognizing and validating skills acquired by adults in charge of their own learning;

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[3] Education, integration and citizenship – Basic Education Policy Document, Ministry of Education, Lisbon – March 1998; Developing, consolidating, guiding – Secondary Education Policy Document, Ministry of Education, Lisbon – November 1997, Autonomy and Quality – Higher Education Policy Document, Ministry of Education, Lisbon – January 1997.

[4] PRODEP III – Working Document – October 1999 version.

[5] Employability – defined as 'the ability to obtain and stay in employment in several jobs throughout life in a professional career that may involve changing jobs regularly – which depends primarily on the ability to upgrade knowledge and qualifications at any time'.

[6] Betting on education for all – Strategic document for the development of adult education and training – Alberto de Melo *et al.*, Ministry of Education – Collection Educação para o Futuro, Lisbon, April 1998.

Setting up a new strategy for adult education and training

- **consolidating and improving the quality of school education for all**, in pre-compulsory education and the basics of lifelong learning, so that school is the milieu *par excellence* for access to information, learning and the acquisition of knowledge, as well as intelligence that is critical, responsive to innovation and motivated to take up some form of continuing education and training.

Strengthening the quality of school education for all

The above-mentioned horizontal objectives and strategy take account of persistent educational inadequacies inherited from the past, as follows:

- a level of school attainment distinctly lower than that of all other European countries; in the mid-1990s, 80% of the population aged between 15 and 64 had only nine or even fewer years of schooling, and around two-thirds had no more than six years;
- limited access to pre-compulsory schooling (55% of the population aged between 3 and 5 in 1994/95);
- still considerable early school dropout (rejection or apathy often a reality in some localities and among specific social groups);
- inadequate development of technically slanted vocational training at secondary school and a certain lack of arrangements for linked-work-and-training at this level;
- the low social relevance attached by students/families to some polytechnic higher education, resulting in a clear preference for university programmes/degrees;
- the only slowly emerging interface between education, training and employment in the fields of linked-work-and-training, school and vocational guidance, and the validation and formal recognition of skills, as well as the transition between initial training and working life.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Pre-compulsory education

Pre-compulsory education for all children aged 5

In order to fight educational and social exclusion and improve equality of opportunity, it is intended to broaden participation in pre-compulsory education such that, by 2003, all children aged 5 secure a place at school and 70-75% of those aged between 3 and 4 do so. It is also intended that the overall development of individual children should be encouraged by stimulating behaviour conducive to all forms of learning, along with their personal and social development and their integration into a range of different social groups, in a way that is consistent with cultural pluralism and subsequent preparation for citizenship.

Compulsory education

Developing alternative forms of training

In order to fight against educational and social exclusion and improve equality of opportunity in access to education, alternative forms of schooling for children with special learning difficulties have been introduced.

Establishing partnerships with educational communities

The development of priority education areas is under way and, within them, partnerships with educational communities and schemes to improve quality in education are being introduced. Programmes for the entry of young people into working life enable them to complete their compulsory schooling, and offer them the chance to undergo subsequent vocational training for a formal qualification if they do not wish to continue their studies immediately.

Fighting school dropout and exclusion

Provisions aimed at greater school autonomy and new forms of administration and management have been introduced to enhance the quality of education. A variety of measures are contributing to the fight against school dropout and exclusion, the development of experiments helping pupils to adjust to school, the promotion of new kinds of educational partnership with parents and educational communities, stronger cooperation with local authorities, due regard not only for conventional academic knowledge but also horizontal skills centred on the behaviour of pupils, and basic skills for the exercise of citizenship and for employability.

Offering a second chance

Young people aged between 15 and 18 who have not successfully completed their compulsory schooling, may also gain admission to a network of education and training facilities comprising various kinds of course and continuing daytime 'second chance' provision.

Post-compulsory secondary education

Developing initial linked-work-and-training

A system of linked-work-and-training has been developed in collaboration with firms and the support of a commission of representatives from various ministries and employer and union confederations. By 2002, this system of training will enrol 25,000 young applicants for a first job.

Diversifying provision

Many different courses have been organized to broaden the range of available provision, including general and technological courses in conventional, vocational, artistic and continuing education. Special emphasis has been attached to the artistic, scientific and technological components, as well as to opportunities for linked-work-and-training and other strategies for bringing schools closer to the world of work. An effort has been made to ensure that all streams in secondary education (including general, technological and vocational options) constitute real alternative solutions of equal acknowledged value.

Availability of vocational qualifications

Various mechanisms for coordinating education and training systems are being consolidated under joint initiatives by schools, economic interests and training centres. The aim is that, by 2006, all young people aged between 15 and 18 should be able to enter post-compulsory secondary education or, if they are already employed, some form of work enabling them to obtain a vocational qualification.

Higher education

Reducing dropout and repeated years

The aim here is to invest actively in increasingly qualified human potential, by creating the conditions in which citizens are entitled to training for a qualification and able to update and reshape their skills on an ongoing basis. As a result, institutions are required to mobilize their resources and determination to fight all persistent signs of school failure (repeating years and dropping out) by drawing up and developing measures to end them, via programmes to boost school attainment.

Developing equality of opportunity and flexibility so as to boost motivation

An overhaul of the admissions system for higher education is in hand. Its purpose is to increase equality of opportunity and flexibility so that there is a virtually unlimited *de facto* choice of institutions for learners, along with elimination of current distortions in the system. It is hoped that this will also encourage greater motivation on the part of applicants.

Establishing a national assessment system

Development and course contracts are to be established with public-sector higher education institutions, to improve their quality and ability to perform in accordance with the aims of economic, social and cultural development. The introduction of a national assessment system is also envisaged.

Easier access

Furthermore, adults aged over 25 without the formal qualifications normally required to enter higher education may now undertake courses at this level after sitting specific examinations, and obtain the corresponding qualifications when these courses have been completed. New recently adopted legislation also gives authorized access to higher education (without the normally required qualifications), provided that some form of post-compulsory secondary education has been followed by a minimum period of professional experience.

Adult education

It is intended that this should contribute to enhancing the qualifications and skills of the population, promoting social integration and the exercise of citizenship and boosting employability. For this purpose, the National Agency for Adult Education and Training (ANEFA) was set up in September 1999. Acting simultaneously in the areas of demand and supply, the ANEFA is responsible for persuading the adult population of the need to embark on continuing education and training, making all available provision more accessible and attractive and, to

Motivating people to take advantage of adult education and training, and mobilizing all available resources

this end, mobilizing institutions within existing formal systems of education and training, as well as many other bodies (such as municipalities, associations and firms). ANEFA will also contribute to the development of an autonomous sub-system of adult education and training, by identifying and recognizing new kinds of provision for adults and formally validating previously acquired knowledge and skills. While not itself a training organization, ANEFA will finance and support bodies and activities for adult education and training, especially where they combine continuing education with forms of training geared to the labour market. In order to be accessible to the greatest possible number and to very mixed kinds of target group, special emphasis will be devoted to the gradual development of a system based on distance education methods and personalized forms of support.

Horizontal initiatives

Developing school and vocational guidance

- **Promoting school and vocational guidance by using internal school resources (psychology and counselling services) and external resources.** For example, ANEFA supports the setting up of 'S@bER+' clubs as neighbourhood areas run by local public or private entities concerned with catering for and providing information and support to adults interested in their own particular forms of lifelong education and training. Two accessible Internet databases are concerned with provision in education and training, namely *Sete Léguas* (seven 'leagues') and *Rotas* (highways).

A more effective interface between education, training and employment

- **Strengthening the interface between education, training and employment policies and practice.** Greater flexibility and choice is offered in secondary school courses. Permanent observatories for basic and secondary education and an observation system for patterns of graduate entry have been established and facilitate the ongoing control of the application of policies. As to graduate education and training, new integrated courses (combining modules for core skills, general education, preparatory and vocational training), and new kinds of formal recognition simultaneously acknowledging levels of school equivalence and vocational qualifications, are geared to the same end. The Observatory of Employment and Vocational Training monitors the development of employment both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The **Interministerial Committee** for the coordination of the **'Education for All' Programme** (Comissão interministerial de coordenação do Programa 'Educação para Todos – PEPT) aims to ensure the completion of nine-year compulsory education by all and universal access to full secondary education, as basic conditions for personal development and professionally qualified young people. The National Apprenticeship Committee (*Comissão Nacional de Aprendizagem*) supplies guidance and monitors training activities of young people within the school/firm-based vocational training system and the *Comissão de Acompanhamento dos Cursos de Educação e Formação Inicial.*

- **Raising the level of qualifications and skills of teachers, by matching their professional profile to the demands of a learning society.** This relates to the new approach of the role of schools and teachers in education, with the former assuming prime importance in the educational process, and the latter a fresh identity as the custodians of education and training and providers of guidance in accessing information and acquiring knowledge. In this novel context should be noted the consolidation of school autonomy with the establishment of new arrangements for autonomy, administration and management, the reorganization of the school network and the creation of clusters of schools. This will also enable more effective interaction between teachers at the various levels of education by contributing to their new role as custodians of education and training. Initial and continuing training of educational stakeholders (such as teachers, trainers, local organizers, evaluators, advisers and tutors) will be a priority focus of interest.

Raising the qualification level of teachers

Pilot projects

The 'Education for All' programme aims to ensure total respect for compulsory schooling lasting nine years, and universal access to full secondary education, by creating the right conditions for the personal development and professional skilling of young people.

Due for full implementation between 2000 and 2006, the ALFA programme of support to the first stage of basic education aims, amongst other things, to offer financial support to schools at this level, so that the most disadvantaged of them obtain the infrastructure needed to improve their teaching and training conditions.

The aim of the PIJVA (*Programa para a Integracão dos Joves na Vida Activa*, or Programme for the Integration of Youth into Active Life) is that, in addition to basic schooling lasting nine years, each young person should receive secondary or higher education, or further training for at least one year that leads to a qualification, and makes it easier to enter a professional occupation through contact with the world of work and the acquisition of professional experience.

AZIMUTE is a programme for school and vocational information and guidance.

The aim of the *Nónio* – 21st Century Programme – is to support the development of projects to bring the information and communication technologies (ICTs) into education, the promotion and training of teachers in ICTs, and the promotion of international cooperation in the area of ICTs, particularly by incorporating the national school network into the network of European schools. Many provisions of the Programme are in the form of competitive examinations aimed at accrediting and financially supporting *Nónio* skills centres and school projects.

The *Ciência Viva* programme launched by the Ministry of Science and Technology seeks to contribute to greater familiarity with science and technology and improvements in science teaching in Portuguese schools, by reorganizing initiatives on the part of the scientific and educational communities to systematically ensure that pupils in basic and secondary education benefit from classroom training through the strengthening of experimental science teaching in schools.

The S@bER+ company project, developed by ANEFA, seeks to trigger off a process to strengthen and reform lifelong adult education and training via an extensive package of measures.

The *Falar Português (Re)corrente* scheme, incorporated into the provision of continuing adult education, is focused on the development of mechanisms to support and revitalize the Portuguese language, and the injection of a fresh emphasis into technical courses by overhauling curricula and forms of pupil participation.

The aim of the *Inserjovem* programme built into the National Plan for Employment in the directive to 'improve employability' is to give a fresh chance to all young people who have been unemployed for less than six months, by way of training, occupational experience, employment, retraining, personalized kinds of provision, guidance or any other measure designed to encourage their integration into professional life.

The *Reage* programme also built into the National Plan for Employment in the directive to 'improve employability' aims to give a fresh chance to all adults who have been unemployed for less than 12 months, by way of training, occupational experience, employment, retraining, personalized kinds of provision, guidance or any other measure designed to encourage their integration into professional life.

FINLAND

The significance of the concept at national level

Learning at any age, both within the formal system and outside it

The Finnish definition of the term 'lifelong learning' applies to the period from early childhood to old age, and all learning environments from those of formal education institutions to less formal settings such as work, the community and the Internet etc.

Boosting competitiveness and fighting social exclusion

As the current government programme indicates[1], 'the future of Finland and the Finns is strongly bound up with knowledge and expertise as well as the ability to utilize this know-how and expertise to create new innovations. Raising the level of expertise of the whole nation will support Finland's development as an advanced country and will at the same time enhance Finland's competitiveness. Identical educational opportunities, in accordance with the principle of lifelong learning, are the right of each citizen irrespective of place of residence, age, mother tongue or financial status. Educational policy will prevent social exclusion and answer the challenges imposed by old age'.

Aims and strategies

New Development Plan for Education and University Research 1999-2004

The Finnish government (Council of State) decides every four years on the Development Plan for Education and University Research (*koulutuksen ja korkeakouluissa harjoitettavan tutkimuksen kehittämissuunnitelma*). The current Plan covers the years 1999-2004 and, in it, the concept of lifelong learning is declared to be one of the main principles underlying the development of education. The prospect of lifelong learning will mean that education is identified less with formal institutional activity and seen increasingly as a process covering all ages, forms of learning, and learning environments in an approach highlighting its contribution to the renewal of occupational and production structures. Its contribution to the enrichment of life in a more personal, less career-oriented sense is no less important.

Improving the educational level of all age-groups; recognition of skills acquired outside formal education; better counselling; adaptation and enhancement of teacher training

The current plan for 1999-2004 was approved by the government in December 1999. Its specific aims reflect the above-mentioned challenges and are geared to improving the following in terms of lifelong learning: the basic educational level of young people in the transition from school to working life; the basic educational level of the middle-aged; learning ability at all ages; learning opportunities available to senior citizens; formal recognition of skills and knowledge obtained outside education institutions; educational information and counselling; the criteria for funding education institutions; and the enhancement of teaching skills. The plan includes a special section on lifelong learning and, in addition, the principle of lifelong learning is a basis for several actions.

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[1] Programme of Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen's second government (April 1999).

High educational standards, learning skills, and continuous learning among the adult population

The content of the principle of lifelong learning has been defined in the plan as follows: a high standard of education, learning skills, and the provision of opportunities for continuous learning among the adult population, and methods of implementing it. This definition is regarded as the central educational goal for the entire population, and it will be emphasized that the development of learning skills is one of the most important aims in all educational sectors. The new plan also encourages the appreciation and promotion of learning outside educational institutions.

The Internet as a tool for lifelong learning

In order to achieve the goals of lifelong learning in practical terms, it is necessary to obtain adequate and comprehensive information about all opportunities for studying and the financing of studies. The intention is to launch an Internet-based interactive service through which citizens, as well as those working in educational information services, can obtain further details about education.

Experience with the previous Development Plan for Education and University Research indicates that most of the objectives in the latest Plan will be achieved in one form or another.

Education, training and research in the information society

Another important government plan, which takes the principle of lifelong learning into account, is the National Strategy for Education, Training and Research in the Information Society (*koulutuksen ja tutkimuksen tietostrategia*). The first strategy, which was finalized in early 1995, outlined the information and communication policy for education, training and research into the 21st century. It contained the opinions and proposals of the expert committee set up by the Ministry of Education on how the level of education and research could be raised by means of information technology, thus promoting national competitiveness and employment. The strategy also incorporated the views of the committee on how to promote the availability and use of information, and assess the needs and identify the means for giving citizens basic skills in using information and communication technologies. In addition, the strategy outlined measures for safeguarding high-performance computing capacity in research, providing a sound basis for the production and use of network-based multimedia in Finland, and safeguarding the development of information networks for education and research as a whole.

Equal study opportunities, using the entire educational system

The aims of the strategy have been implemented through the Information Society Programme (1995-1999) of the Ministry of Education. Almost FIM 1 billion (EUR 167 million) of earmarked budget funding have been used for this purpose. The Ministry of Education launched the new (second) strategy, for the years 2000-2004, in December 1999. It states that, by the year 2004, Finland will be a leading society for knowledge and interaction. Success will be based on the equal opportunities of citizens to study and develop their own knowledge, while making extensive use of information resources and educational services. A high-quality, ethically and economically sustainable mode of operation in network-based teaching and research will have been established. New demands for knowledge require the rapid and extensive application of the principle of lifelong learning to the entire education system, in order to motivate and teach the population to manage, analyse, evaluate and refine the increasing flow of information and, as a result, exploit the opportunities offered by technology. The growing skill requirements of the information society will be met by systematically developing the essential requirements for lifelong learning.

Increasing input to adults and the impact of ICTs on jobs

The rapid development of the information society both presupposes and facilitates an increase in the level of knowledge of the nation as a whole. This is why the impact of education on development cannot be restricted to basic education alone. From the standpoint of working life and society, education has to be directed increasingly towards adults, and accompanied by development of the support structures for it – and the learning that goes with it – to be maintained throughout life. The current pace of change means that lifelong learning is an essential element of the new strategy. Progress in the information and communication technologies (ICTs) is rapidly altering occupational structures and job descriptions. Meanwhile, previously separate learning environments – home, school, and the workplace – are merging into lifelong learning, a single long-term enterprise focused on a wide range of concerns. Media literacy, ICT skills and exploitation of appropriate opportunities will thus all be included in future lifelong learning programmes.

An information society fair to all

So that lifelong learning achieves its aims in an information society fair to all, an extensive programme will be launched to familiarize citizens with new trends in the information society, and improve their media literacy and ICT skills.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Opportunities for frequent and continuous learning

The formal education system contributes to lifelong education by educating young people to a high level, and providing them with the skills to engage in continuous learning, as a result of which they can anticipate and adapt to required changes in qualifications. The system also has to boost opportunities for all adults to benefit from education and training and improve their learning skills. This approach is a natural consequence of modern society in which the global integration of national economies, fast development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the ageing of the population are all affecting the need to learn.

Pre-school education

Ensuring that all six-year-olds have access to pre-school education free of charge

Lifelong learning begins with pre-school education. Appointed in the spring of 1999, the new government has set out to provide all six-year-olds with pre-school education free of charge from 2001 onwards. Lifelong learning has been one of the main principles guiding this renewal.

Compulsory and upper secondary education

Helping even more people obtain an upper secondary education qualification

Some 94% of young people regularly embark on either general or vocational upper secondary education, and approximately 82% complete their studies. According to the above-mentioned 1999-2004 Development Plan, completion of upper secondary education should be regarded as a minimum educational requirement. It is also one of the main principles underlying the successful implementation in Finland of a lifelong learning strategy.

Higher education

Increasing the provision of non-university higher education; redefining the content of university degrees

Higher education has taken lifelong learning principles into consideration by increasing the number of study places in polytechnics (higher non-university institutions). According to the current Development Plan, 70% of young people should be able to continue their studies in universities or polytechnics. According to the principle of lifelong learning, adult education provided in polytechnics will be strengthened, as well as open polytechnic studies. The role of the polytechnics in developing work communities will also be emphasized.

In universities, degree requirements will be adjusted so that the key skills and knowledge needed for basic qualifications in various fields are clearly defined. Studies will be evaluated in accordance with the amount of work they require. Opportunities for adults to obtain an academic degree will be extended.

Adult education

Increased opportunities to raise the level of basic education and enhance employability

In adult education, the main goal is to improve the basic educational level of the middle-aged, which is currently lower than that of young adults. It is also important for lifelong learning that education should improve continuous learning skills to boost employability. Specialized and personalized adult education services will give those with weak or outdated basic education a chance to improve their skills and knowledge. Increased opportunities for mature students to graduate from universities or polytechnics will also be provided.

Pilot projects

The Ministry of Education has not yet introduced a lifelong learning action plan. It is expected that this will now happen, given that the new Development Plan for Education and University Research was approved by the government in December 1999.

SWEDEN

The significance of the concept at national level

The definition of the concept of lifelong learning is the subject of discussions in Sweden. The Swedish contribution to the study carried out by the OECD on financing lifelong learning[1] takes as its reference point the following definition:

'Lifelong learning is a multidimensional concept. In Sweden it is used to describe an attitude to learning which goes further than the concept of recurrent education. Lifelong learning covers both the formal educational system, from pedagogical measures in the early years of the pre-school up to studies at university level and popular adult education for both young people and adults. But the term also covers opportunities for learning at work, the creation of learning organizations and new tasks to be carried out and at the same time develop individuals who make up the work team. Lifelong learning must be based on each individual's opportunity to learn something new every day. The great challenge is to create amongst all citizens a desire to learn and also the opportunities for realizing this.

The foundation for this attitude to lifelong learning must be built during the child's early years at pre-school level and later permeate the formal education system, as well as attitudes to competence development in working life and opportunities for participating in study circles during leisure time.'

From pre-school to tertiary and adult education, both in the formal system and outside it

Aims and strategies

An integrated perspective at each level of education ...

The idea of lifelong learning is not new to the Swedish education system. It manifests itself at all levels of the system, whether pre-primary, compulsory, or upper secondary level, where provided in the form of a common core syllabus gives individuals access to tertiary education and the basis on which to continue to develop their skills throughout their professional lives. Adult education represents in itself a long Swedish tradition through popular education and the municipal system of adult education that gives the individual the possibility of acquiring upper secondary qualifications and entering tertiary education at a later date. A large proportion of the population participates in 'study circles'[2].

... and framing specific plans for adult education

In the present context of rapid and constant change, particularly within working life, Sweden is very inclined to pursue and even strengthen this idea of lifelong learning. Granting education free of charge and giving people an opportunity to resume a path through education are important objectives for the Swedish government. The government is also in the process of strengthening the possibility of developing adults' skills using a variety of study supports to promote continuing learning.

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[1] OECD (1999), 'Education policy analysis – 1999', Paris.

[2] One large-scale form of non-formal education of adults, partly financed from public money, is provided by adult education associations, often under the title 'study circles'.

The importance attached to adult education is related to the developments and rapid changes that will characterize both social and working life from now on, and mean giving everyone the opportunity to adapt to these changes. The government and the local authorities have the overall responsibility of putting in place a structure for lifelong learning that will satisfy the needs of the individual to gain new knowledge and develop at a personal level. A number of pilot initiatives are taking place in the field of adult education. On the basis of experience gained from these initiatives, the objective, in the years to come, will be to develop further the adult education system. In addition, the higher education system will play an increasingly important role in the lifelong learning context.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Pre-school education

From the perspective of lifelong learning, children must have the opportunity of participating in pre-primary activities. The first pre-school curriculum was established in 1999, with the aim of placing more emphasis on the pedagogical aspects and constructing direct links between pre-school activities, including the pre-school class for 6-year-olds, and the start of the compulsory school system.

Providing more pre-primary activities

The Swedish local authorities are required to offer pre-school education, from the age of one year, to all children whose parents are working or undertaking studies. A proposed new law will make pre-school education available to all children aged between 4 and 5 up to a minimum of 525 hours a year (three hours a day). To increase the number of children participating in pre-primary activities in general, the Swedish government has among other things proposed limiting enrolment fees for all pre-school activities.

Compulsory education

A common core syllabus so that a defined group of skills can be attained

The Swedish system provides compulsory education for nine years, known as *grundskola,* set out as a common core syllabus without any division into separate stages. The local authorities are allowed complete autonomy with regard to the organization of this education within the framework defined by the Education Act[3] and the curricula. These documents define the objectives to be attained by each pupil to the end of the fifth year and then by the ninth year of compulsory education. The local authorities have the responsibility of making it possible for every child to meet these objectives.

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[3] The 1985 law that applies to the entire public education system.

Upper secondary education

In Sweden, upper secondary education forms a single structure. General and vocational education are two pathways through the same system – the *gymnasieskola*. Although upper secondary education is not compulsory, approximately 97% of pupils make the transition between *grundskola* and *gymnasieskola*. A new structure for upper secondary education was put in place between 1992 and 1995. This new system is based on 16 programmes. During the 2000/2001 academic year a 17th programme will be introduced. All national programmes are three years in length, and provide a broadly-based general education and qualifications for further study at university level.

A range of options, sharing a common base, and giving everyone access to higher education

All national programmes comprise eight core subjects: Swedish (or Swedish as a second language), mathematics, English, natural sciences, civics, religion, physical and health education and art. To these core subjects, which make up approximately one-third of the total time, are added courses in specific subjects. All the programmes give access to further education. Out of the 17 programmes, 14 have a more vocational orientation and prepare pupils for the world of work. The other three mainly prepare them to pursue studies in further education.

Individual remedial programmes

There are also individualized programmes intended to help those who encountered difficulties in pursuing upper secondary education. For young people with little motivation or who are uncertain about their choice of subjects, these programmes give individual follow-up. They contribute to picking up young people who need remedial help for subjects in which they have difficulty at the level of compulsory education. The aim is that pupils who have made up lost ground should continue their upper secondary education in a national programme.

Higher education

Diversity, flexibility, and new technologies for maximum accessibility ...

Enabling every individual to return to the education system at any time during his or her life is a fundamental element of the Swedish education system. Looked at from this angle, higher education is designed to be as open as possible. A particular effort is made in terms of geographical accessibility, so that each county has at least one university or university college and supplementary courses are accessible at other institutions situated within easy reach. The flexibility with which the courses are organized (evening classes, part time classes, etc.) and the distance learning offered by certain universities enlarge access further. Well-established in Sweden, distance learning often exists in the form of correspondence courses. The majority of universities and other higher education institutions now offer different types of distance course designed in such a way that they can be followed, irrespective of the student's place of residence, job or family responsibilities. The emergence of new communication technologies opens up numerous opportunities in this field and they are being given priority. In 1999, DISTUM, the Swedish institute for distance learning was set up. It is a centre for research and development in the use of new technology in distance learning. There is also an ongoing pilot project on post-secondary vocational training (KY – see below).

Generally speaking, many students in Sweden study part time, begin their studies at the age of 25 or over, or take a long break from them. Almost one out of two students falls into one of these categories. This situation in fact demonstrates that the possibility of always being able to return to education is a reality. Most higher vocational training courses, which are part of higher education, are not necessarily undertaken at the start of working life but in the context of continuing education.

Furthermore, when people wish to return to the education system, their professional experience may be taken into account when assessing their eligibility for a course.

... and cooperation with the surrounding environment

In addition to their roles in education and research, the universities and university colleges are required to develop close cooperation with their surrounding environment. This cooperation, which has always existed, was explicitly formalized by the Higher Education Act[4] in 1997. It enables the results of university research to become disseminated more easily into society, and the educational needs of the latter to be taken into consideration by higher education institutions. In addition, the government encourages the universities and university colleges to respond positively to the specific requests of companies, local authorities, etc. that offer to finance specific training courses.

Adult education

In Sweden, adult education comprises different elements. One way of describing the system is to divide it into three main areas, each with specific objectives:

- basic education for adults, the national state schools for adults (distance learning), Swedish tuition for immigrants (*Svenska för invandrare – Sfi*), municipal education for adults (*Komvux*) and municipal education for adults with learning disabilities (*Särvux*);
- post-secondary vocational education, which covers advanced vocational training (KY), supplementary schools and different forms of labour market training. Municipal adult education (*komvux*) also offers this type of education;

A broad range of possibilities

- popular education (*folkbildning*), or in other words the adult education associations (education mostly in the form of study circles) and folk high schools

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[4] The law passed in 1992 regulating the system of higher education.

(*folkhögskolor*) that also provide courses at the level of basic education and post-secondary vocational education.

Priority given to upper secondary education for all

With the 'Adult Education Initiative' (see below) the objective of the government is to offer upper secondary education to all individuals who have not had the opportunity of benefiting from this level of education.

Financial support

Since 1975, adults have been able to claim various kinds of financial support furthering the strategy of support for those who want to resume education at secondary level. Financial support for higher education studies has an even longer tradition. The government has recently introduced legislation into parliament on this question. Its objective is among other things to lighten the rising burden of expense that these studies will impose on individuals, and encourage them to take up further training. The new study support system will come into effect from 1 July 2001.

Pilot projects

Four projects are under way in an effort to integrate lifelong learning into the Swedish education system:

1. The adult education initiative;
2. Advanced vocational training (KY);
3. Validation of the knowledge and skills of adults;
4. Distance learning in adult education.

1. The adult education initiative

This initiative, known as *Kunskapslyftet,* is a five-year programme launched in 1997 with the participation of all the local authorities in the field of adult education. It is part of the government strategy to halve unemployment by the year 2000. The aim is to achieve in a short period of time an overall boost in national knowledge, thereby providing those with lower levels of education the opportunity to get a job and continue their learning. At the same time, *Kunskapslyftet* will contribute to the reform of adult education. The initiative has four important perspectives – renewal of education and labour market policy, more equitable distribution and increased growth.

A commission appointed by parliament has the task of proposing goals for *Kunskapslyftet,* assessing what ongoing education and in-service training is needed by adults and making recommendations on the division of responsibility and the financing of adult education. The commission also has to consider measures that would stimulate the pedagogical development of adult education, and has been entrusted with monitoring *Kunskapslyftet.*

Target groups and objectives

The main target group in the first instance comprises adults who are unemployed and who either completely or partially lack three-year upper secondary school ability. However, *Kunskapslyftet* also focuses on the needs of employees with low levels of education.

Education will be the instrument for providing better opportunities to get or change work. The unemployed who lack upper secondary school competence need education in order to secure a stronger position on the labour market. The adult education initiative thus relieves the pressure on labour market policy. At the same time, opportunities for cooperation and joint use of resources at the national employment offices and municipalities will be improved. The initiative is particularly important for those working in sectors adversely affected by the state of the economy and structural changes. It will also have a positive influence on the gender distribution of work on the labour market.

Furthermore, the adult education initiative is expected to boost the renewal and development of working life. New ways of organizing work impose new demands on employees. As a result of increased access to a skilled labour force, there will be better conditions for economic growth.

The initiative should also contribute to the development and renewal of adult education in terms of content and working methods. Its teaching practice and methods are likely to progress, as well as the exchange of ideas and experience between municipalities and educational organizers. Over the five-year period, adult education will be reformed and developed – and thus better placed to meet the challenges that the individual, working life and society will be facing in the new millennium.

New directions for adult education

Local authorities are assuming increasing responsibility for the provision of adult training. New forms of cooperation between them and national employment agencies and other bodies concerned with the labour market will be developed.

The adult education initiative involves mobilizing resources in order to lower the threshold at which people with little previous experience can start studying, by means of (for example) more targeted recruitment and information activities, individual courses, and more courses for guidance purposes. Many different educational organizers are involved. The most is made of differences in terms of profile and working approaches, and the establishment of contact networks is encouraged. Cooperation will be improved between upper secondary school adult education and labour market education.

It is expected that new forms of activity, unconventional organizational solutions, information technology and new approaches to teaching will be applied. The supply of vocationally-oriented courses will be increased in order to meet the requirements of new groups. Workplace and apprenticeship training can be arranged, as well as a combination of studies and labour market policy measures. It is intended that the transition between different levels and types of schools should be made easier, and that access to adult education should be based on the preconditions of participants.

The role of the government

A special state grant will be provided for guidance courses and upper secondary school adult education. A limited number of municipalities will also receive support for basic adult education. Since 1 July 1998, the National Agency for Education has been responsible for organizing and monitoring the work of *Kunskapslyftet*. Project applications from the municipalities for upper secondary adult education are submitted to the Agency, which decides on how the funds are to be allocated. Distribution of state grants for *Kunskapslyftet* is based on three different criteria:

- unemployment and the level of education in each municipality;
- the direction and scope of the municipal programme in guidance courses, general courses and vocational courses;
- the quality of a municipality's programmes for renewal and development of adult education in the direction described above.

The state grant is submitted as a lump sum to the municipality. Using the grant, the municipality is meant to achieve its aims with regard to the direction, scope and quality of the education specified in its application to the National Agency for Education.

Responsibility of the local authorities

The local authorities are responsible for planning and running the programmes. They may, if they wish, cooperate with other local authorities or training providers.

The curricula, evaluation criteria and all the regulations regarding municipal adult education are applicable even when other partners are involved, with the exception of courses provided by folk high schools.

Monitoring and evaluation

Each local authority is responsible for evaluating its own activities. The National Education Agency monitors and evaluates the municipal adult education programmes regularly. The Commission is taking a direct interest in this initiative by providing independent monitoring and evaluation, and by coordinating the national evaluation of adult education programmes.

Funding the studies

Under *Kunskapslyftet,* there are a number of different ways for students to finance their studies. For the majority, the most advantageous study support is the special education grant which was introduced at the same time as the adult education initiative itself. The grant is primarily intended for unemployed persons who have not completed a three-year upper secondary education programme, and who intend to study at compulsory or upper secondary school level. Persons aged between 25 and 55 can apply for the grant.

The grant is equivalent to the amount a student would have received in the form of unemployment benefit and is available for a maximum of 12 months. Other forms of study support include *svuxa* (special adult study assistance for the unemployed), *svux* (special adult study assistance) and study grants.

2. Advanced vocational training

Pilot projects, under what is known as 'KY', have been put in place in post-secondary vocational education and advanced vocational training since the autumn of 1996. Through these projects, which continue until 2001, some new forms of cooperation between the workplace and the education system are being developed.

Advanced vocational training is a form of post-secondary vocational education, in which a third of the course is devoted to the specialized application of theoretical knowledge to the workplace, where the employers are responsible for financing the course. This form of learning is not traditional in so far as it requires proactive learning in the workplace and explicitly seeks to develop skills and attitudes such as flexibility, social skills, the understanding of overall processes and problem solving, etc.

A commission has been set up specifically to monitor this pilot initiative. It is composed of representatives of the political parties, organizations active in the job market, local authorities and higher education institutions. It has a central secretariat.

Other players, including universities, university colleges, municipalities, county councils and private companies, are invited to participate in the initiative.

The commission selects projects for a grant on the basis of criteria such as market need, the quality of the education and its relevance to the employment envisaged, etc.

The commission is responsible for monitoring the initiative and completing an independent evaluation of it. This work been carried out by the Technological University of Luleå.

The commission has put forward a proposal for integrating this type of course into the education system.

Target public and objectives

These courses are aimed at people who hold an upper secondary education diploma, and those at work who would like to develop their skills in a particular field.

The courses are based on close collaboration between working life and the various bodies that provide training (upper secondary education institutions, local adult education initiatives, higher education institutions, companies, etc.). They have to answer a real labour market need, but no sector is ruled out.

The aim is to satisfy the demand for a qualified workforce, not only at the level of traditional vocational skills, but also that of closely related skills in great demand on the job market, such as flexibility and problem-solving.

These pilot programmes will enable experience to be gained in the area of new courses, new forms of education and new training providers. The programmes also provide an opportunity to evaluate the interest of business and students in this type of system.

Course content

A secondary further education qualification, or equivalent experience, is required in order to take part in these training courses.

The subject matter is drawn from upper secondary school curricula, supplementary and advanced special courses, further education courses and courses suggested by the business community. Courses combine a practical approach with detailed theoretical knowledge, to provide both the necessary quality and meet market requirements.

In addition to subjects directly connected with vocational content, the following courses are also included in syllabuses:

- mathematics and natural sciences;
- information technology and its applications;
- economics and economic theory;
- society and culture;
- language and communication.

The courses also develop the following personal skills:

- language skills, reading, writing, and the use of information;
- problem-solving, critical and creative reasoning;
- negotiation and team work.

Organization at the workplace must accommodate this type of learning and supervise it adequately. It must provide the familiarization required, while nevertheless remaining sufficiently distant from the vocational environment, and allowing for the acceptance of responsibility, etc.

The active participation of employers is also necessary in the design of training projects.

3. Validation of the knowledge and skills of adults

In 1998, a special government-appointed commissioner presented proposals for principles to guide the validation of foreign vocational skills at upper secondary school level, which would also be applicable to other levels of education. The government has recommended that pilot projects for the validation of foreign vocational skills be carried out, and that a broader pilot scheme should be introduced, under which all adults who so wish, can have their vocational skills and knowledge validated, irrespective of where and how these qualifications were acquired.

A commissioner appointed by the government in 1999 was asked to implement and evaluate three pilot projects during 2000, and propose organizational arrangements etc. for a broader pilot scheme.

The commissioner also has to consider the possibility of establishing a national validation system in Sweden. The government has emphasized the importance of continued support to existing development work with evaluation and validation at local level.

The term validation is defined here as a means of identifying a person's current knowledge, skills and competence, and describing them in a transparent and systematic way that is easily recognizable and can be acknowledged by potential employers and educational institutions. The validation process may include tests, counselling and careers guidance, supplementary education and training, work placements, etc. Validation is meant to facilitate entry into the labour market and/or to provide a basis for further studies. It can also be used as a pedagogical instrument in adult education, and to adapt the planning and delivery of a course to the specific needs and initial knowledge base of each adult learner.

4. Distance learning in adult education

In 1998, the Swedish government decided to launch an initiative for developing new methods of distance learning for adults, based on the new information and communication technology. A task force has been set up to launch projects in this field for the development of new methods and support for flexible learning, with the assistance of the two national schools for adult education. The work is associated with developing support for accessible long-distance education organized by municipal adult education providers at upper secondary level.

Several ongoing projects relate to the following:

- methodology in adult distance education: free training courses for teachers involved in municipal adult distance education;
- a catalogue of distance learning resources, comprising an inventory of what is available at local level and could be used more widely (at national level), in order to prevent duplication and waste of resources; the project is also developing general support functions, such as models of flexible organization in education, validation, support with careers guidance, etc;
- advanced tools in distance learning based on NTIC[5]: production of tools at national level, followed by their dissemination at local level, to compensate for the possible lack of available local investment;
- a network of local study centres, involving the development of methods of cooperation between different training providers, and formal or external systems to enlarge the availability of adult training;
- styles of distance learning: updating models of distance courses offered in a variety of forms depending on the different styles of student learning; cooperation between teaching researchers and technological experts for the development of personalized learning strategies;
- language courses for young deaf people: production of courses specifically in Swedish and English to help deaf students become familiar with distance learning;
- development of web resources: access via an Internet address to information concerning all projects in this pilot programme, and the creation of a common platform for national resources in accessible and distance education.

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[5] New technologies of information and communication.

UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND

The significance of the concept

Development of a learning society

The UK government's Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) does not have a formal definition of lifelong learning. The government believes that investing in education and training delivers economic, social and personal benefits, and is therefore committed to the development of a 'learning society' in which everyone, regardless of their circumstances, expects to undertake learning and to upgrade their skills throughout life.

The government believes that individuals, employers and the State should all contribute, directly or through earnings foregone, to the cost of learning over a lifetime because all gain from this investment. Individuals enhance their employability and skills, businesses improve their productivity, and society enjoys wider social and economic benefits.

In the policy documents, *The Learning Age* and *Learning to Succeed*, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment has set out his strategy for developing the 'learning society' by promoting post-16 participation in learning in the home, the community, the workplace and in traditional institutions. This strategy complements action to raise achievement and standards within schools.

Broad-based, inclusive definition of learning, including vocational and non-vocational learning

For DfEE research purposes (specifically, the DfEE 1997 National Adult Learning Survey), a broad-based, inclusive definition of learning has been adopted. This includes all types of taught learning and non-taught learning of a deliberate nature, including self-directed learning. Both vocational and non-vocational learning are covered regardless of whether they lead to qualifications.

Aims and strategies

The UK government believes that learning is the key to prosperity – for individuals, business and the nation as a whole. To achieve stable and sustainable growth, the UK needs a well-educated, well-equipped and adaptable labour force. The government also believes that learning has a wider contribution to make. It promotes a civilized, fair and inclusive society, develops the spiritual side of our lives and promotes active citizenship. It enables people to play a full part in their community. It strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation. It helps us fulfil our potential and opens doors to a love of music, art and literature.

National Learning Targets for post-16 young people and adults

For England, the government has set National Learning Targets for 2002, which include:

Targets for post-16 young people:
85% of 19-year-olds with a 'level 2' qualification[1];
60% of 21-year-olds with a 'level 3' qualification;

Targets for adults:
50% of adults with a 'level 3' qualification;
28% with a 'level 4' qualification.

Reducing the percentage of non-learners. Increasing the participation of organizations recognized as 'Investors in People'

Participation in Learning Target (age 16-69):
7% reduction in non-learners (equivalent to around 500,000 more learners).

Targets for organizations:
45% of medium-sized or large organizations recognized as Investors in People;
10,000 small organizations recognized as Investors in People[2].

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Schools

Raising achievement and standards in schools

The government's policies for schools and lifelong learning will result in a 'continuum of learning'. Children will get the best start in life from their initial education. Young people will have the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes to enter the adult world. The strategy for promoting post-16 participation in learning complements actions to raise achievement and standards in schools. Initiatives in this area include a major programme of school improvement with, for example, the setting of targets for schools and local education authorities and strategies to improve literacy and numeracy.

Post-compulsory education

Post-16 education and training is principally undertaken by the (largely) state-funded tertiary sector and by a vigorous private training sector.

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[1] The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is in the process of implementing the framework of national awards recommended by the Dearing review (Dearing, 1996). The new framework embraces academic and vocational qualifications:
Entry Level (['National Curriculum'] levels 3, 2 and 1);
Foundation Level 1 (['GCSE'] grades D–G, ['GNVQ'] foundation level and ['NVQ'] level 1);
Intermediate Level 2 (GCSE grades A*–C, GNVQ intermediate level and NVQ level 2); and
Advanced-level (GCE AS and A-level, GNVQ Advanced-level and NVQ level 3);
Higher level 4 (sub-degree level); NVQ level 4;

[2] Investors in People is the national standard which sets a level of good practice for training and development of people to achieve business goals. The standard provides a national framework for improving business performance and competitiveness, through a planned approach to setting and communicating business objectives and developing people to meet these objectives. The process is cyclical and is intended to engender the culture of continuous improvement.

Learning to Succeed sets out a framework for delivering lifelong learning. The new arrangements will take effect in April 2001. Its proposals include:

- setting up a national Learning and Skills Council (LSC), with a network of local councils and a £5 billion (around EUR 8.25 billion) budget (the LSC will replace the existing Further Education Funding Council and the national network of Training and Enterprise Councils);
- giving employers the largest input into LSCs;
- establishing a new youth programme, 'Connexions', which will include a new youth support service modernizing the Careers Service and improving links with the Youth Service, with dedicated personal advisers for young people;
- greater cooperation between sixth forms and colleges;
- establishing an independent inspectorate for all work-related learning and a new role for OFSTED (the Office for Standards in Education) in 16-19 provision in schools and colleges, with both inspectorates working on inspection of colleges for this age-group;
- the government's employment service taking over work-based learning for unemployed adults.

Setting up a national Learning and Skills Council, establishing a new youth programme, establishing an independent inspectorate for work-related learning, developing work-based learning for unemployed adults

Within the further and higher education sectors, the government is investing some £1.5 billion (around EUR 2.47 billion) over two years to expand student numbers, raise quality, support capital investments and boost research.

Pilot projects

The government's lifelong learning strategy both builds on established programmes and policies and also introduces new initiatives.

Action in established areas includes, for example:

- a major expansion of further and higher education to provide an extra 800,000 places by 2002, many of which will be taken up, it is expected, by part-time and mature students;
- expanding adult literacy and numeracy provision to involve over 500,000 adults a year by 2002;
- promoting the take-up by employers of the Investors in People standard for effective investment in people, especially among smaller firms;
- boosting local education authority adult education (on a matched funding basis) by £9 million (EUR 14.85 million) in 1999/2000 and by £18 million (EUR 29.7 million) in 2000/2001.

New initiatives include, for example:

- a new University for Industry (UfI) to make it easier for firms and individuals to learn. The UfI will be launched in the autumn of 2000. Using information and communication technologies, the UfI will broker high-quality learning products and services and establish up to 1000 local learning centres by March 2001. The UfI already operates a national freephone helpline – 'learn direct' – offering information about learning opportunities, and is developing a network of learning centres;

- setting up individual learning accounts to encourage people to invest in their own learning. Small numbers of these accounts are already available and a national framework will be introduced in 2000. The aim is to have one million people with accounts by 2002. There will be associated incentives: individuals will get a 20% discount up to £500 maximum (EUR 825) a year on most training and an 80% discount on certain information technology (IT) training; and employer contributions will qualify for deduction from taxable profits. There will be a universal offer of accounts for all those in work or seeking to return, but also some targeting to (for example) the low-skilled;
- establishing the new youth programme, 'Connexions' (see above). The aim is to support young people to stay in education up to and beyond the age of 19. It covers five areas: the development of a new youth support service, to ensure young people have the help, support and guidance that will raise their aspirations and tackle any personal problems standing in their way; encouraging employees aged 16 and 17, who did not achieve level 2 qualifications at school, to take advantage of the 'right to time off for study or learning'; ensuring the range of qualifications and courses is attractive and motivating to individuals and employers; driving up quality and standards across all modes of learning; and tackling barriers to learning, particularly financial ones;
- developing a £10.5 million (EUR 17.32 million) Union Learning Fund to promote learning partnerships between employers, employees and their trade unions to support and develop skills in the workplace;
- investing about £50 million (EUR 82.5 million) over three years to develop a coherent network across England of local information and advice services for adults, covering a wide range of career and learning opportunities;
- investing £20 million (EUR 33 million) over four years in an Adult and Community Learning Fund to support innovative grassroots learning projects. The Fund is tailored to help small community and voluntary organizations, with a focus on disadvantaged groups and areas;
- investment of £250 million (EUR 412.5 million) over three years to fund around 700 IT learning centres in England aimed at improving IT access for adults and small businesses.

WALES

N.B.: Although the information above refers to England, the broad aims (for example the development of a learning society) are common across the United Kingdom. The following gives information on specific policies and initiatives in Wales.

The significance of the concept

A single seamless path of learning from early learning throughout life

In Wales, the Green Paper on lifelong learning, *Learning is for Everyone* (LIFE), together with the policy document, *Building Excellent Schools Together* (BEST), proposes the creation of a single seamless path of learning from early learning throughout life. Government policy for lifelong learning will be applied in ways that reflect the distinctive needs and circumstances of Wales.

Aims and strategies

Quantified objectives for various target groups

For Wales, the report, *An Education and Training Action Plan for Wales*[3], proposes the following targets for lifelong learning:

- the numbers of 16-18-year-olds without qualifications to reduce from some 1 in 5 in 1996, to 1 in 10 by 2002 and 1 in 20 by 2004;
- the numbers of 19-year-olds without an NVQ level 2 or equivalent to reduce from over 1 in 3 in 1996 to some 1 in 5 by 2002, and to fewer than 1 in 5 by 2004;
- the proportion of adults of working age without qualifications to reduce from some 1 in 4 in 1996 to 1 in 7 by 2002, and to fewer than 1 in 8 by 2004;
- the proportion of adults of working age with an NVQ level 2 or equivalent to increase from over 5 in 10 in 1996 to 7 in 10 by 2002, and over 7 in 10 by 2004;
- the proportion of adults of working age with an NVQ level 3 or equivalent to increase from some 3 in 10 in 1996 to approaching 5 in 10 by 2002, and to over 5 in 10 by 2004;
- the proportion of adults of working age with NVQ level 4 or equivalent to increase from some 1 in 5 in 1996 to over 1 in 4 by 2002, and approaching 3 in 10 by 2004;
- the proportion of working-age adults with functional basic skills in literacy to increase from some 8 in 10 in 1996 to at least 9 in 10 by 2002, and to above 9 in 10 by 2004;
- the proportion of adults with functional basic skills in numeracy to increase from over 5 in 10 in 1996 to 6 in 10 by 2002, and above 6 in 10 by 2004.

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[3] Education Training Action Group for Wales (1999) *An Education and Training Action Plan for Wales*. ETAG: Cardiff.

Proposals also include the widening of participation in education and training by 10,000 annually from 1999 to 2004, and the establishment of a new framework in support of small businesses to encourage their participation in employee training and development to measurable accredited standards.

Various institutional arrangements

The Education and Training Action Plan for Wales also proposes:
- that the National Assembly establishes the National Council for Education and Training in Wales (CETW). The CETW will replace the Further Education Funding Council for Wales and the Welsh Training and Enterprise Councils;
- that the CETW will secure and fund all post-16 education and training in Wales, except higher education, through a network of Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs). CCETs will be partnerships of local providers, including further education institutions, local authority school sixth forms and adult education, private training providers and the voluntary sector;
- greater cooperation between sixth forms and colleges;
- giving employers a greater say in education and training.

Pilot projects

Particular initiatives proposed for Wales include the development of a National Learning Strategy for Wales encompassing the following: better access to information and provision; new action to increase and widen participation in education and training; the development of a single, flexible, credit-related qualifications framework spanning all post-16 learning; and stronger cooperation, collaboration and partnership at the local, regional and all-Wales levels.

Wales is also closely involved in the UfI (University for Industry) and individual learning accounts.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The significance of the concept

Employability and personal fulfilment

The continuous development of skills, knowledge and understanding that are essential for employability and personal fulfilment.

Aims and strategies

More participation, emphasis on basic and key skills, coherence, collaboration, use of ICT, and quality

In February 1999, the Department of Education for Northern Ireland and the Training and Employment Agency published jointly a significant policy document, *Lifelong Learning – A New Learning Culture for All*. The key aims of the lifelong learning strategy are to:

- increase significantly adult participation in vocational education and training, including access to further and higher education and training from groups previously under-represented;
- emphasize the development of basic and key skills;
- ensure greater ease of progression through the system of qualifications;
- provide a more coherent relationship between education and training provision and the skills needs of the regional economy;
- enhance collaboration between education and training providers and the world of business and industry;
- upgrade significantly the information and communications technology (ICT) skills of teachers, instructors and students;
- sustain and improve the quality of provision, and enhance performance across the education and training sectors.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Schools

The School Improvement Programme

While a particular strategy addresses the post-16 population and adult learning, a number of separate initiatives and policies are also being introduced by the Department of Education, under the School Improvement Programme, to enhance the performance of the school system and promote a greater respect for learning and the benefits of education.

Tertiary education

Expansion of the further and higher education sectors

The main **education** input to the lifelong strategy is from the tertiary sector, i.e. further education colleges and universities. The Action Plan developed to meet the challenge of the strategy over the next three years includes:

- providing 8000 additional places in further education;
- providing 2000 additional places in higher education;

- implementing the national plans for the University for Industry in Northern Ireland, through 'learning direct' and learning centres to help individuals and businesses engage in learning in innovative and convenient ways at home, in work, or in the community;
- introducing a system of 'individual learning accounts' to help 25,000 people by 2002 to plan for and invest in their own learning;
- establishing improved mechanisms to identify and monitor Northern Ireland skills needs, supported by a new skills task force;
- providing work-specific learning for the unemployed through the New Deal;
- updating the Jobskills programme for young people entering the labour market, including an enhancement of employer-led modern apprenticeships and introducing a new legal 'right to time off' for study for young workers;
- significantly increasing help for and access to adult basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills training;
- widening access to third-level education from previously under-represented groups;
- establishing a strategic collaboration fund to encourage closer partnerships between the further education system, businesses and the community;
- consulting on a new funding structure for further and higher education;
- introducing a Northern Ireland credit accumulation and transfer system to make it easier to build learning and qualifications throughout life.

SCOTLAND

N.B.: The documents which describe the present lifelong learning strategy belong largely to the previous administration, before the establishment of the coalition government which took up office following the establishment of the Scottish parliament in 1 July 1999. The details provided below and the documents from which this information was gathered were mostly in place under the old arrangements. The Scottish Executive has stated its strong commitment to lifelong learning in its programme of government, 'Making it Work Together', and will be producing its own strategy for advancing lifelong learning, in the first half of 2000. It is likely that much of the following will continue to be pursued in the new lifelong learning strategy. Responsibility for lifelong learning policy is fully devolved to the Scottish Executive.

The significance of the concept

In September 1998, the then Scottish Office Education and Industry Department published a document entitled *'Opportunity Scotland: A Paper on Lifelong Learning*. Although this paper did not articulate a definition of what constituted lifelong learning, a brief paragraph from its introduction provided some direction. This suggested that 'the concept of lifelong learning reflects the fact that, in the midst of change, we need to update continually the skills in the workforce and better equip people to manage their own future. Learning is a broad term encompassing a wide range of activities including initial and adult education, training skills, development and leisure activities. Lifelong learning is particularly concerned with improving access to learning opportunities and encouraging people to take greater responsibility for their own learning.'

Concept covering initial and adult education, training skills, development and leisure activities

Improving the skills of the workforce and better equipping people to manage their own future

In a later document, *Opportunities for Everyone, A Strategic Framework for Scottish Further Education*, a rationale was provided which claimed that, 'Every aspect of life in Scotland today is subject to rapid, often fundamental change; technology, the economy, work patterns, social structures, even the values by which we live and work. At the heart of the Government's response to these challenges is a commitment to learning as the key to progress and prosperity in the twenty-first century. Major initiatives have been set in train, in pre-school education, in our schools, and throughout working life, all designed to make lifelong learning a reality.'

Aims and strategies

In the foreword to *Opportunity Scotland* mentioned above, Donald Dewar, who was then the Secretary of State for Scotland, outlined five themes which he said were crucial to the lifelong learning agenda. They were raising awareness, improving access, extending participation, encouraging progression, and ensur-

Raising awareness, improving access, extending participation, encouraging progression, ensuring quality

ing quality. Elsewhere in the document, the key aims of lifelong learning in Scotland were listed as follows:

- more and more people in Scotland should be motivated to get involved in learning for whatever reason and at whatever level;
- they should be able to access the right opportunities at the right time for them;
- all aspects of the education system should be geared to supporting learners and helping them achieve their goals.

A ten-point action plan

The then Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, in *Opportunity Scotland*, set out its ten-point action plan for 2002. The action plan aimed to:

- establish a Scottish University for Industry which will break down barriers to learning by using new technology to make learning easier and more convenient;
- connect all schools, colleges, higher education institutions, libraries and many community centres to the National Grid for Learning;
- invest £100 million to enable an additional 42,000 students to participate in further and higher education;
- set up a national system of individual learning accounts and enable 100,000 people in Scotland to become account holders;
- further develop the University of the Highlands and Islands Project with government support;
- allow some 150,000 people to benefit from involvement in the New Deal and New Futures programmes;
- have 15,000 'modern apprentices' and more young people qualified to level 3 by means of the Skillseekers programme;
- allow 16- and 17-year-olds to have the right to study for a level 2 qualification or equivalent;
- introduce 'Higher Still' and develop a comprehensive Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, building on the success of the SCOTCAT system;
- establish a new strategic framework for the further education sector which would promote inter-college coordination and maximize access to all courses without needless competition between colleges.

The contribution of the different levels of the education system

Schools

The Scottish Strategy claims that the best foundation for successful learning in adulthood is a positive early experience of learning at school. It is vital that young people view learning as an ongoing feature of their lives. In the future, young people will need to acquire the learning habit to ensure their own success and the future success of the Scottish economy.

Installing the learning habit, tackling underachievement, emphasizing the basic skills

Schools are being encouraged to cultivate awareness of lifelong learning opportunities and explore career ideas from a much earlier age. Among the responsibilities of each school is to convince all pupils that learning will give them better opportunities and choices in life. In Scotland, efforts to tackle underachievement in schools support the lifelong learning strategy. In Scottish schools, government targets are being set in the four key areas of literacy, numeracy, examination attainment and attendance. Competence in the basic skills of reading, writing, and maths are fundamental to learning and would greatly assist any future attempts in educational achievement.

This will be supported in schools by the 'Higher Still' programme which will provide qualifications for the whole ability range. There will also be further support in the 'Alternatives to Exclusion' programme, which will pilot a number of alternatives for children at risk, while 'Education for Work' will promote education/industry links and enterprise education.

Links between schools and further education colleges can offer pupils an insight into the world of post-school education. In some areas, senior school pupils attend 'link' courses at further education colleges which allow them first-hand experience of studying vocational areas such as engineering and hairdressing.

Further education

Expanding the sector

The government in Scotland is also committed to the principle that anyone who has the ability to benefit from further and higher education should have the opportunity to do so. Particular emphasis will be placed on expansion in the further education sector, given its pivotal role in lifelong learning and widening access.

In the publication entitled *Opportunities for Everyone: A Strategic Framework for Scottish Further Education* (1999), the Secretary of State for Scotland drew attention to the importance of the further education sector in advancing the lifelong learning agenda. He regarded the challenge facing the colleges as being able to provide relevant and flexible learning opportunities, both for personal development and to enable people to improve their skills and employment prospects.

One-third of public funding for colleges over the next three years

When the Scottish Office published *Opportunities for Everyone* in March 1999, the Secretary of State for Scotland announced a 33% increase in public funding for colleges over the next three years. This publication recognized that further education colleges offer the most popular route into lifelong learning, and the strategic framework is part of the government's plans for a strong Scotland built on the solid foundation of access for all to the opportunity of lifelong learning.

Higher education

Links between schools and higher education institutions are also important. They are a vital part of addressing a major government priority – reaching out to and including people who have been under-represented in higher education to date. The government will particularly encourage better links between schools in disadvantaged areas and universities and colleges, which can be built on existing experience of successful models of good practice in Scotland.

Wider access and cooperation between further education and higher education

The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council allocated £1 million (EUR 1.65 million) in 1998-99 to support wider access projects, and is considering significant changes in the way it funds teaching to reward institutions committed to widening access. The newly-established Scottish Further Education Funding Council will assist the promotion of cooperation between further education and higher education.

Community education

Cooperation with local authorities

The community education sector is also recognized as having an important role to play. In the Government report *Communities: Change Through Learning* (November 1998), it was noted that community-based learning opportunities would play an important part in Scotland becoming a dynamic learning society. A Scottish Office circular was sent out to all local authorities in April 1999 providing advice on the provision of community education.

Key initiatives

The following initiatives are regarded as elements which will contribute to and encourage lifelong learning in Scotland.

The Scottish University for Industry (SUFI), which will be launched in autumn 2000, is at the heart of the government's vision for lifelong learning. It will be a public/private partnership working with business, education and training providers and other organizations in new and exciting ways to add to the existing learning methods. The SUFI will connect people and businesses who want to improve their skills with the people who can offer them the learning they need, delivered how, where and when, most convenient for the adult learner.

The National Grid for Learning (NGFL) will be a powerful influence in creating a society of lifelong learners. The NGFL will provide high quality education material which will be available on the Internet to schools and colleges, teachers, lecturers, pupils, students and other learners. Although it will start with schools and colleges, the NGFL is intended ultimately to provide access to all sectors of education and for lifelong learning.

The University of the Highlands and Islands Project will work in partnership with local authorities, education institutions and the private sector. Thirteen education institutions in the Highlands and Islands have come together as partners in the University of the Highlands and Islands Project. This collaborative project shows how existing colleges and institutions can adapt and use the latest technology to extend opportunities, break down geographical barriers and allow people in the remoter areas to have access to more advanced learning opportunities and qualifications than ever before. This partnership of further education colleges and academic and research institutions will offer new opportunities to young people and mature students to remain in the Highlands and Islands.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. The Government in Scotland also welcomes plans by the higher education sector and the Scottish Qualifications Authority to introduce a comprehensive Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. This will help all learners, employers and providers to understand the qualifications system. It will show where each qualification is placed in the framework, and how different qualifications relate to each other. It will also assist learners to plan progression towards their goals.

Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) will offer people a new means to invest in their own learning at all levels and whatever their circumstances. The accounts will give them a new level of control over planning learning finances, and will provide a means for employers or government to contribute to the costs of that learning where appropriate. Accounts will be available for everyone and may be used to cover the direct costs of learning and advice and guidance. The framework for ILAs will be launched in Autumn 2000 and it is planned to have 100,000 learning accounts set up in Scotland by 2002.

Progress File will replace the National Record of Achievement which has been used in Scotland for seven years. It emphasizes increased individual ownership and personal responsibility for development through life. The progress file has been designed with the needs of different learners in mind. It includes guidance for people at different stages – getting started, moving on and widening horizons.

Higher Still. Since August 1999, 'higher still' qualifications have been available to students in schools and colleges. They are designed to provide nationally recognized qualifications for all, raise attainment, encourage progression, support parity of esteem, increase flexibility and improve performance in core skills.

Local Learning Partnerships (LLPs). A network of such partnerships has been established since 1997. Scottish Office challenge funding was made available and, in most cases, was matched or exceeded by contributions from other local organizations. The 18 LLPs have helped people understand each other's needs and priorities, and resulted in more coordinated and refined approaches from which all involved stand to benefit, and which encourage lifelong learning in their areas. These partnerships have been important in building a lifelong learning culture locally from which learners, providers, employers and communities can benefit.

The Skillseekers Programme funds 16- and 17-year-olds to pursue work-based qualifications at certain levels. This has increased the opportunities for young people to gain qualifications through work-based training. In addition, the Teaching and Higher Education Act places a statutory duty on employers to allow paid time off work for 16- and 17-year-olds in order to encourage young people in employment to continue in learning. **Modern Apprenticeships** also offer a structured framework for young people to achieve qualifications and other industry-related skills.

ANNEX:

Questionnaire for background paper

LIFELONG LEARNING: THE CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Questionnaire for the EURYDICE Network with a view to the preparation of a background paper on the issue

NB: A particularity of the notion of 'lifelong learning', and one of the arguments justifying the present survey, is the multitude of different definitions attached to the concept, especially when it has to be made operational. A helpful reference, which must not affect your answer to question 1, is the following OECD definition of lifelong learning[1]:

> **'This view of learning embraces individual and social development of all kinds and in all settings – formally, in schools, vocational, tertiary and adult education institutions, and non-formally, at home, at work and in the community. The approach is system-wide; it focuses on the standards of knowledge and skills needed by all, regardless of age. It emphasizes the need to prepare and motivate all children at an early age for learning over a lifetime, and directs efforts to ensure that all adults, employed and unemployed, who need to retrain or upgrade their skills, are provided with opportunities to do so.'**

Clearly, this view is extremely broad in scope. **Bearing in mind the area covered by EURYDICE network activity and the proposed deadlines for information-gathering, it must be emphasized that the present survey is concerned exclusively with the contribution of the formal education system to such a comprehensive approach.**

1. **What definition is given in your Member State to the concept of *Lifelong learning*?**

   At this level, significant variations exist between Member States. They reflect in particular the diversity of not only education and training systems, but the structures of production. Such differences are also related to the extent to which the lifelong learning approach is developed or practised in the country concerned. Possible legislation on the subject, as well as green or white papers and other official texts, are among the special sources of information that will enable you to specify how the concept is defined in your own Member State.

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[1] OECD, *Lifelong Learning for All*, Paris, 1996, p. 15.

2. *What are the main aims that the lifelong learning strategy, whether planned or already implemented, is meant to pursue?*

The aims most commonly referred to include the strengthening of basic learning (including adult learning), improving the transition between education and working life, improving the general consistency of the education system, encouraging adult education, and diversifying the supply of education and training and bringing it into line with demand.

Please indicate the priority aims to which the lifelong learning strategy in your own Member State is directed.

3. *What is the contribution and involvement of the different levels of education (pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, etc.) as regards this lifelong learning strategy?*

For example, the strengthening of basic learning as one aim of a lifelong learning strategy may imply broadening access to pre-school education, fighting school failure and dropout in primary and secondary education, and improving the quality of compulsory education in general. Similarly, diversifying the supply of education may mean a reform of higher education so that it can develop appropriate quality programmes for adults wishing to be trained during their careers, etc.

In replying to this question, it is essential to identify clearly the levels of education that will be explicitly involved in bringing lifelong education to fruition and, in the case of each level, the particular approach adopted. This does not mean itemizing all measures for improving the education system, which might somehow result in a lifelong learning approach but, instead, concentrating on measures deliberately identified as priorities for achieving it.

4. *What institutional arrangements have been established to coordinate this strategy?*

For example, has a task force, inter-ministerial committee or other body been set up? Please indicate the arrangement(s) concerned

5. *What are the main features of the pilot projects or programmes established by the public authorities?*

This is an essential question with respect to the information that will be given in the final publication. Only pilot programmes or projects introduced by the government, possibly in a partnership involving several ministries, are referred to here. For example, they may be programmes that are centred on the new ICTs and directly associated with lifelong learning, pilot projects for adult education, schemes for the establishment of quality standards in basic education, etc. ... as long as they are **explicitly** part of a lifelong learning strategy. The information required includes the exact title of the pilot programme or project, the date it was introduced and its duration, aims, characteristics and, where appropriate, the kind and number of beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries (professionally active persons, unemployed women, long-term unemployed young people, etc.).

6. Please indicate the titles of reference documents and, if possible, enclose them in your reply.

In order to avoid subsequent requests for further information, it is very important that any title or name (of a programme, project, authority or other body, etc.) should be given in its original language with a translation in either English or French (in an official version where applicable). As regards reference documents, the bibliography supplied should follow the same pattern (title in the original language, with translations where applicable) and contain all relevant details (title, author, publisher, and place and date of publication).

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EURYDICE

EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe

The **EURYDICE** Network produces reliable, readily comparable information on national education systems and policies. **EURYDICE** also acts as an observatory, highlighting both the diversity of systems and their common features.

Working on behalf of policy-makers and the world of education, **EURYDICE** prepares and publishes:

- regularly updated descriptive analyses of the organization of education systems;
- comparative studies on specific topics of European interest;
- indicators on the various levels of education from nursery to higher education.

EURYDICE also has its own database, **EURYBASE**, which constitutes a further highly detailed reference source on education systems in Europe.

By circulating the results of its work, **EURYDICE** promotes better mutual understanding of these systems and the common issues that run through them.

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